

AN EXPLORATION OF THE EFFECTS OF KARATE TRAINING ON YOUNG
CHILDREN IN KWANONQABA, MOSSEL BAY

by

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Abstract

Constant exposure to community violence has very detrimental and pervasive effects on children. These effects range from behavioural, cognitive and neuro-developmental problems to a variety of psychiatric disorders. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether Karate programs can be used in violent communities to help children circumvent these detrimental effects of exposure to violence. This study adopted a qualitative research approach and the epistemological framework used was social constructivism. Group interviews were conducted with the research participants. The case study method was chosen, and thematic analysis was used as the method of analysis of the children's stories. These stories were reconstructed in terms of themes. The themes that emerged included: anxiety, fear, discipline, respect for self, others and authority. After exposure to a traditional karate program for a period of time, the participants' attitudes towards violence changed. They believed that violence was a last resort and that there were better ways to deal with conflict. They began developing more self-discipline, not just in the dojo but in other areas of their lives as well. The participants learnt to respect others, as well as themselves and their instructors, teachers, parents and friends. They also felt less afraid to be in their community and developed more self-confidence. Karate programmes can be used in violent communities to help prevent the negative outcomes in children associated with exposure to violence. These programmes can be used in conjunction with other developmental programmes to help improve the outcomes of these children.

Key Terms: Karate; community violence; youth; exposure to violence; maladaptive behaviour; perceptions of violence; developmental outcomes; effects of violence; behavioural changes

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Chapter 1: Introduction



Children are one of the most vulnerable and at-risk groups in society is children. They look to adults and caregivers to provide for their everyday needs and to keep them safe. The Constitution declares that “Every child has the right to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation” (Section 28(1)(d) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No. 108, 1996), and “a child’s best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child” (Section 28(2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No. 108, 1996). In South Africa children’s rights are entrenched in the following legislative documents:

- The South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996)
- African Charter on the Rights of the Child (ACRWC)

- Children's Act (No. 38 of 2005) as amended by Children's Amendment Act (No. 41 of 2007)
- Child Justice Act (No. 75 of 2008)
- Sexual Offences and related Matters Act (No 32 of 2007)
- Social Assistance Amendment Act (No. 5 of 2010)

When it comes to protecting and caring for their children, many families in South Africa face challenges. The legacy of violence South Africa has inherited, as well as illnesses such as HIV/Aids, places a huge burden on the country. These laws were enacted to correct past errors, guarantee the rights of children, and try to alleviate the burden on families. They also guarantee that the best interest of the child is paramount when making decisions that affect the child. The laws guarantee the protection of certain rights for children, which include parental care, basic nutrition, shelter, basic healthcare, social services, and protection from abuse. These laws also specify a number of crimes commonly perpetrated against children, a criminal justice system specifically for children in conflict with the law and make provision for child grants to help parents improve the child's standard of living. However, due to various factors, including inadequate resources to implement these legislative provisions, the reality of most South African children's lives falls far short of these provisions.

Violence is a daily reality for children living in South African townships (Stavrou, 1993, p. 3). Violence permeates every part of the community children live in – their homes, schools, and the streets they walk every day (Osofsky, 1999, p. 33). From 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017, 2 129 001 serious crimes were committed in South Africa (SAPS crime statistics 2017).

The 2017 crime statistics show the following:

Crime	Per year	Per day
	2017	2017
Murder	19 016	52.1
Attempted murder	18 205	49.9
Assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm	170 616	467.4
Common Assault	156 450	428.6
Rape	39 828	109.1
Sexual Offences	49 660	136.1
Drug related crimes	292 689	801.9
Carjacking	16 717	45.8
Robbery with aggravating circumstances	140 956	386.2
Robbery at residential premises	22 343	61.2
Common Robbery	53 418	146.4
Burglary at residential premises (reported as most feared crime)	246 654	675.8

Figure 1. www.saps.gov.za/services/crimestats.php

As children are one of the most vulnerable members of our communities, and violence is a community problem this study investigated the feasibility of a possible intervention strategy to help mitigate the effects of violence on children. It was found that three out of four children under the age of five were killed while under the supervision of a caretaker as a result of abuse (Mathews et.al; as cited in Richter et. al; 2018, p. 181). The term “community” has been used in early sociological work to describe a group of people who share a geographical space, are linked by common interests, and are socially interdependent (Guttermann et al., 2000, p. 573). The *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* defines

community as “all the people who live in a particular area, country, etc.”. Various studies of community violence have frequently used the term “community” to describe specific socioecological contexts where violent events are prominent, specifically urban or inner-city communities, indicating that these are not only the locations of violent events but that the the dynamics of social relationships around the child or youth is potentially violent (Guttermann et al., 2000, p. 575; Bell & Jenkins, 1993; Freeman et al., 1993; Horowitz et al., 1995; Schwab-Stone et al., 1995; Shubiner et al., 1993; Warner & Weist, 1996) Korbin, 1981; Levinson, 1989). To understand the important elements of community, the psychological “sense of community” has become the focus of recent work in community psychology (Guttermann et al., 2000, p. 573).

It is important to gauge the severity of the problem of violence in the communities I have chosen to explore. The lack of a definition of community violence makes this difficult. It is difficult to compare various studies regarding community violence experiences as previous studies have not clearly defined community violence (Guterman, Cameron & Staller, 2000 cited in Sieger et al., 2004, p 244). Surprisingly, more attention has not been given to defining community violence, given the magnitude of this issue (Guttermann et al., 2000, p. 572). The National Centre for Children Exposed to Violence (2006), cited in Kelly (2010), defines community violence as “any act of interpersonal violence towards an individual by another individual with no relationship to the victim and includes physical and sexual assault, shootings, gang violence, drugs and burglary (p. 61). Community violence is an act of violence that intentionally causes harm to another person, mostly physical harm, as well as violence-related events that occur in an individual’s immediate environment (McCart et al., 2007, p. 434; Sieger et al., 2004, p. 243).

For the purpose of this study, community violence will mean any intentional threats or actual use of physical force against any member of a community, including any immediate

family, that causes injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation (WHO, 2002). Community will mean an interacting population of various kinds of people in a common location (*Community* 2016): in other words, people who live in the same geographical area.

In a violent community, violence permeates every part of the child and adolescent's neighborhoods, occurring in the streets, schools, and homes (Sieger et al., 2004, p. 243). No environment is safe – mothers beat up fathers, fathers beat up mothers, schools are violent, the streets are not much better, and authority figures are involved in and encourage violence as a means to an end (Stavrou, 1993, p. 7; Benjamin & Crawford-Browne, 2010, p. 25). These fathers, mothers, teachers, businessmen, and government officials are the role models upon whom the youth model their behavior.

Exposure to violence can take many forms, including unwelcome sexual contact, physical violence, and observing violence perpetrated against others in the home or community (McCart et al., 2007, p. 434). Exposure to violence is very diverse, and seems, from the literature, to have become not just single events but a normal part of children's daily lives (Turner et al., 2010, p. 328).

Stavrou (1993) reports that children who are exposed regularly to violence over a long period of time tend to adopt violent behavior themselves (p.12). This is especially apparent when their parents inflict violence in the home and on others (Stavrou, 1993, p. 12). The long-term effects on children of prolonged exposure to violence can be devastating. This may extend beyond the children turning to violence themselves. Edleson (1999, cited in Rosewater 2003, p. 5-6) found that children are more likely to develop long-term developmental problems, such as low self-esteem and depression if they are exposed to violence.

Other risk factors in the communities may exacerbate the effects of violence on children (Garbarino, 2001 cited in Sieger et al., p. 245). These risk factors include low-income and father-absent families. Statistics South Africa showed that in 2017 61.8% of black African youths lived in a household where the father was absent (Statssa, 2017, n.p.). Single-parent households do not allow much time for parental supervision, resulting in children spending unsupervised time on the streets, exposed to violence, or committing it (Ruiz-Casares et al., 2018, p. 1). These children may observe community members committing violence and achieving a goal, with little or no punishment, and model their behavior on this.

Living in these communities children are continuously subjected to conflict, tension and violence, which influences their perceptions of violence as a way of solving their problems. Several consequences of interpersonal trauma in childhood have been discovered through research, including potentially severe negative behavioral, cognitive and neurodevelopmental outcomes in exposed youth,¹ as well as psychiatric syndromes such as mood and anxiety disorders (Voisin et al., 2010, p. 2), depression (Lambert et al., 2005, p. 29), bipolar disorder (Zinzow et al., 2009, p. 525), Generalised Anxiety Disorder (McCart et al., 2007, p. 434), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Guttermann et al., 2000, p. 572), increased aggression (Kelly, 2010, p. 61), feelings of hopelessness and helplessness (Barroso et al., 2008, p. 143), personality disorders and suicidality (Heim et al., 2010, p. 691). A person's risk of behavioral, psychosocial, and academic problems increase with continued exposure to community violence (Jain et al., 2012, p. 108; Sieger et al., 2004, p. 244).

These children lack adequate supervision and effective role models upon whom they can model their behavior. There is also a paucity of intervention strategies aimed at combatting the negative effects of the perennially unsafe environment they live in.

¹ Dehon and Weems, 2009, p. 287

Accordingly, this study will investigate whether regular training in Karate is effective in changing perceptions of violence and violent behavior in children.

In 1990 in Atlanta, Georgia, an organization named Kids Alive and Loved (KAL) was formed by a woman who had recently lost her 17-year-old son to violence. This program was developed to identify, recruit, provide support, educate, and empower these children to help prevent the negative consequences of such exposure (Thomas et al., 1998, p. 162). In Chicago, Illinois, the Truth 'N Trauma program was developed by a group of people consisting of various staff and students from a local school (Harden et al., 2014, p 69). This was an after-school program conducted over nine months developing youths more positively as well as addressing their trauma. After the program, the participants had a better understanding of the negative impact of violence on them and were able to recognize that activities such as gang violence are not conducive to a healthy lifestyle. They were able to start making more positive choices in life. A study was done to determine whether a midnight basketball program held in Prince George's County, Maryland, was effective in lowering city-level crime rates (Hartmann & Depro, 2006, p. 183). This study found that there were sharper decreases in property crime rates while these midnight basketball programs were being conducted. According to Danish et al., physical activity is a vehicle for enhancing competence (2005, p. 49). The programs, Teaching Responsibility through Physical Activity and Sports United to Promote Education and Recreation (SUPER) are two sports programs that have incorporated life skills into their sports training (Danish et al., 2005, p. 50). All the above-mentioned programs have shown positive improvements in the outcomes of the youth that they targeted.

Purpose of the study

In this study, I will explore what role karate plays in the lives of children who reside in communities that are characterized as violent. It is suggested that, although lack of

supervision, especially from a parent or guardian, and neighborhood conditions are linked to higher levels of mental stress in children, using more than one kind of intervention may prove beneficial (Sieger et al., 2004, p. 244). Conventional methods (e.g. correctional facilities) have not been shown to be effective in curbing violence among young people. Twemlow and Sacco (1998 cited in Burt & Butler, 2011) found that when a residential facility is used as the sole intervention for aggressive behavior in adolescents, recidivism remains high (p.49). Multiple interventions have been shown to be more effective and some correctional facilities show improved statistics with added social interventions (Burt & Butler, 2011, p. 48). Twemlow and Sacco (1998, cited in Burt & Butler, 2011) believe there is a need for a culturally sensitive and affordable program to complement other interventions, proposing a karate program that integrates clinical components (p. 49). There is a general perception that karate may seem to encourage violence. Contrary to this, my study will explore karate's potential capacity for reducing violence.

By way of illustrating the point in the previous paragraph, early in 2016 a young boy, aged 10, was referred to the dojo where I teach Muay Thai.² This young man had been having trouble controlling his aggression. He was very violent with younger students at his school and was on the verge of being expelled. At home, he would break anything he could get his hands on, including television sets, when he did not get his way. His mother was a stay-at-home mom, but his father works overseas for months at a time. His house doctor, who is a boxer himself, recommended that he be brought to our dojo to see if the training could help him control his anger issues. Due to his particular issue, I adapted my classes to include teachings on certain values and principles that address aggressive behavior, as well as

² Muay Thai is a combat sport originating in Thailand which uses stand-up striking and kicking along with various clinching techniques.

our normal Muay Thai training. All students were subject to these lessons in order to not make him feel singled out.

There were a few issues in class with the student's aggression and his inability to control it, but this behavior was addressed immediately. When the student became aggressive towards his fellow students, he was asked to sit out of the activity that the class was doing. He was only permitted to participate again once he had apologized to the student, the class, and the instructor. This was particularly difficult for him as he loved participating in the class and all activities. This was very effective as he did not like being excluded from an activity, so after approximately a month his behavior started changing during class. After approximately 10 months of training, I made an appointment and spoke with the student's mother regarding his behavior. She informed me that he had made great strides in managing his anger issues. Instead of being the bully at school, he was talking to bullies about their behaviour and how it is not appropriate and that there are other ways to deal with their frustrations. Hurting others was no longer an acceptable means of dealing with his problems. This student is an example of the benefits of a karate training program, coupled with the explicit teaching of therapeutic principles.

Research Question

My research is whether karate training can serve as an effective intervention for reducing violence among communities. Karate philosophy teaches a gentler way to deal with conflict: the way of the gentle warrior. Specific moral values or codes are expected from students. A respectful attitude and frame of mind are taught by positive mentors and role models (that is, the Sensei or karate teacher). These mentors can help guide the youth into approaching the curve balls life may throw at them more productively and aid them in becoming successful and thriving adults.

In this research study I will explore the following:

- ❖ What are the participant's experiences before joining the karate class?
- ❖ What are the participant's attitudes towards violence after participating in a karate program?
- ❖ Based on this study, can karate training change preconceived ideas on violence?

Research Design

For this study, I used a qualitative approach to research. The main sources of data that I utilized for this study are 14 young boys and girls. These children are between the ages of 6 and 12 years old and have been identified as living in at-risk communities. They are all students at a traditional karate dojo in a local at-risk community, Kwanonqaba in Mossel Bay.

The most widely used approach in qualitative studies to collect data is the use of interviews (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 142), with many different interview styles being recognized by researchers, including semi-structured and focus group interviews (Mojtahed, 2014). A series of semi-structured interview questions were prepared for the students and were introduced in such a way that the children understood what they were being asked. By using semi-structured interviews and content analysis and thematic analysis to analyze the data, I was able to gain an in-depth perspective of the participants' views of violence, as well as their experiences of karate training.

Clarification of key concepts

Certain key concepts are used throughout this study. The following is an explanation of these concepts.

- Karate (Japanese: "empty hand") is a martial arts discipline focusing on unarmed defense, using kicking, striking, and defensive blocking with arms and legs (<https://www.britannica.com/sports/karate>)

- Community violence is a deliberate act of violence with the intention to physically hurt another person intended to cause physical harm against a person, as well as violence-related events that occur in an individual's immediate environment (McCart et al., 2007, p. 434; Sieger et al., 2004, p. 243).
- In South Africa, a youth is anyone up to the age of 14-35 years old. For the purposes of this study, I focused on children aged from 6-14 years old.
- Exposure to violence is where someone is in the vicinity of where the violence is occurring, whether they only witness the violence or are victims of the violence.
- Maladaptive behaviors prevent you from adapting to difficult or new situations. They can start after exposure to a traumatic event after an illness or any kind of major life change. Maladaptive behaviors are not constructive behaviors and are often destructive.
- Perceptions of violence are how a certain person understands, regards, and interprets violence. These views differ from person to person.
- Developmental outcomes as discussed in this study is how a child will develop based on their experiences and environment. Developmental outcomes vary depending on their environment and what they are exposed to. This study focuses on the effect that violence has on their developmental outcomes and whether intervention programs such as karate can change these outcomes for the better.
- Behavioral changes indicate how the behavior of a child could change after being exposed to an intervention program like a karate class.

This study explores whether additional intervention strategies and programs, such as karate programs, can help change at-risk children's perceptions of violence, and its usefulness as a way of solving their problems. This study is by no means exhaustive but can possibly shed some light on the benefits to be gained by such programs, as well as filling in some gaps

in the current research on violence prevention programs. In the next chapter, I will examine the existing literature on community violence and its effects on children. I will be investigating the literature regarding the benefits of intervention programs, specifically martial arts-based studies. I will also be laying out my theoretical framework for the study: Ecological Systems Theory.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this study is to explore karate training on young children. The participants of this study live in communities in the greater Mossel Bay area that have high crime rates. A child's development can be negatively impacted as a result of this continual exposure to violence. In order to understand how this exposure affects children, we must first look at what is community violence and how can it affect the children living in these communities. In this chapter, I will be examining the literature to determine what is understood about community violence and its effects on children. I will be investigating the literature regarding the benefits of intervention programs, specifically martial arts-based studies. I will also be laying out my theoretical framework for the study, the Ecological Systems Theory by Urie Bronfenbrenner.

Defining community violence

One of the most comprehensive definitions of violence is given by the World Health Organisation (WHO) (WHO, 2002 cited in Kelly, 2014, p. 1). WHO defines violence as:

“The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation.” (p. 5)

Violence is described by the Centre for Disease Control as “the use of or threat of the use of physical force, with the intention of causing harm to others or oneself” (CDC 1989 cited in Buvinic, 1999, p. 9).

Kennedy and Ceballo (2014) define community violence as a threat or intentional harm to a person or persons in one's own community: however, they exclude spousal abuse, bullying, online violence, violence incited by video games, and physical abuse (p. 69).

McCart et al. (2007) cited in Savahl et al. (2013) define community violence as “deliberate

acts intended to cause physical harm against a person in the community” (p. 2). McCart’s definition includes violence in public places, school violence, domestic violence, and gang violence (Savahl et al., 2013, p. 2). When reviewing 23 empirical studies, Thomas et al. (2012) found that the focus of most definitions is on experiencing, witnessing, or hearing about violence on the part of the parent or child (p. 55).

A common definition of community emerged in a study conducted by McQueen et al. (2001): “a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings”. The word community is often used in everyday language, but when one attempts to define the concept of community, things start to get trickier. No matter who one speaks to, each person’s experience of “community” will be different. The term “community” has proved difficult to define, with many competing interpretations, despite the fact that it has been used widely in the social sciences (Kepe, 1999, p. 418). Thomas et al. (2012) have also found a lack of clear definition and measuring instruments, which has led to difficulties in comparing findings (Thomas et al., 2012, p. 55).

As a result, different definitions are used across studies (Guterman et al. 2000. cited in Sieger et al., 2004, p. 244). Physical force is often the focus of definitions of social violence (Buvinic et al., 1999, p. 9), with some suggesting it is a blend of social and community violence (Kelly, 2014, p. 2). There are so many different forms of violence in society, ranging from one person committing mass acts of violence against others to interpersonal acts of violence on the playground. All of these can have a profound effect on families, the community, and society as a whole (Kelly, 2014, p. 2). There are many different definitions for community violence and no global definition is adhered to by all. In this chapter, I will examine the literature in an attempt to define community violence, as well as the effect it has on those who are regularly exposed to such violence.

Community Violence

No environment is safe – parents beat each other up, schools and streets are violent (Stavrou, 1993, p. 7), and this violence permeates every part of the environment the child lives in (Sieger et al., 2004, p. 245). Based on UNODC's³ 2015 data, South Africa is ranked as having the fifth-highest number of total crimes in the world, with 35.8 murders per 100 000 (Ward et al., 2001, p. 297). The South African Police Service (SAPS) statistics show that some neighborhoods “contribute disproportionately to the national figures” (Benjamin & Crawford-Browne, 2010, p. 4; SAPS, 2009, n.p.). Four out of 10 youths have had physical fights, 1 in 4 teens have been bullied, and 1 in 3 victims of school violence never tell anyone (WHO, 2015). According to the WHO “approximately 70% of South Africa's 20 million young people are more likely to be victims and perpetrators of assault, robbery and property thefts than adults” (WHO, 2015). The homicide rate in South Africa is 5 times higher than the global average (Kaminer et al., 2013, cited in Foster & Brooks-Gunn, 2015, p. 292).

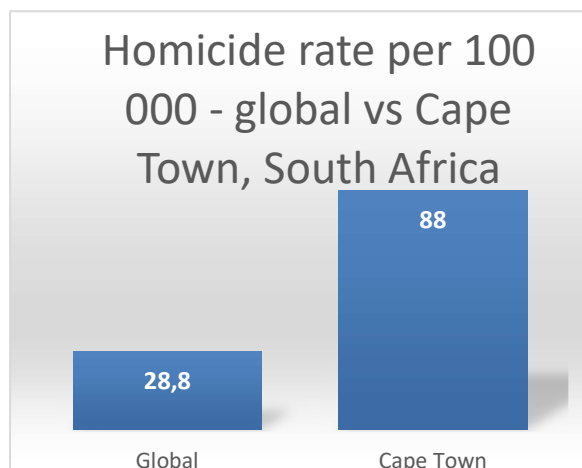


Figure 2

The global homicide rate is 28.8 to 100 000, while in Cape Town, it is 88 to 100 000, with 68.4% of Capetonian young adolescents having reported (Ward et al., 2007) witnessing or being a victim of violence; 58% reported seeing another person being attacked with a

³ UNODC – United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

weapon; 65.6% of children had been hit in their neighborhood; 92% had seen someone hit and 51.8% had been in a fight (Foster & Brooks-Gunn, 2015, p. 293).

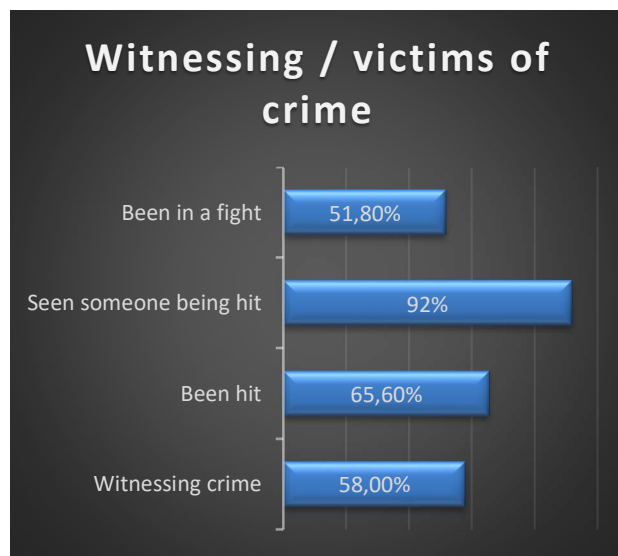


Figure 3

32.5% to 40.3% of South African children have witnessed someone being killed or seen a dead body in their neighborhood (Foster & Brooks-Gunn, 2015, p. 293). A form of violence that South African children most extensively exposed to is community violence (Collings et al., 2013, p. 24). Events in 1990 changed opportunities for and views on violence, with the events during the 14 months from February 1990 to April 1991, claiming the lives of more than 7 000 people (Percival & Homer-Dixon, 1998, p. 293). The clashes between the Inkatha Freedom Party and the ANC from August to September 1990 were more fierce than the 1984-86 upheavals, resulting in the deaths of 700 people, dwarfing the death toll of 575 in the 1976 Soweto uprisings (Percival & Homer-Dixon, 1998, p. 293). The Institute of Race Relations (1994, 296) reported that, due to the conflict in South Africa from September 1984 to December 1989, approximately 3 500 people died due to political violence; 12 000 died between February 1990 and December 1993 due to political violence, while approximately 20 000 died in 1992 due to criminal and political violence (Percival &

Homer-Dixon, 1998, p. 291). These events changed the mindsets of communities, introducing violence as a potential means to an end.

The post-apartheid political context in South Africa does not grant the opportunity for some groups to acknowledge the trauma of the past, which has impeded these groups' ability to deal effectively with the effects of the past trauma on their psychological well-being (Shefer et al., 2010). Violence in South African Townships is largely influenced by past racist policies and their results, with urbanization and the relocation from rural areas of black people, leading to townships becoming overcrowded and adding more strain on the poor resources that are available (Ngqela & Lewis, 2012, p. 91). Political struggles and violence in its various forms are characteristics of the society created by the socio-political history of South Africa (Savahl et al., 2013, p. 1). Hook (2004) cited in Ratele (2008) argues that, when thinking of life in post-colonial South Africa, the reciprocal combined effects of psychological and political factors must be taken into account (p. 523). The dawn of democracy in 1994 may have helped quell political violence but has done nothing to address violence that affects people on a daily basis such as domestic, community, and interpersonal violence (Savahl, et al., 2013, p. 1).

The African National Congress (ANC) came into power in 1994 and inaugurated a comprehensive set of legislative reforms, which were designed to eradicate racism and inequality, including gender inequalities (Morrell et al., 2012, p. 16). The numerous legislation changes brought in at the end of Apartheid directly affected social identities, which are shaped by many aspects of daily life, including race, ethnicity, gender, culture, class, and gender (Moolman, 2013, p. 93).

People who live in these communities tend to have frequent experiences with violence as children and later as adults, which helps shape the personal meaning they attach to their experiences (Benjamin Crawford-Browne, 2010, p. 4). According to Benjamin and

Crawford-Browne (2010), “people in these communities may have no other experience than living in unsafe environments” (p. 26). How these forms of violence affect South African children and youth is of great concern (Isaac et al., 2011, cited in Savahl et al., 2013, p. 1).

The effects of community violence on children

Considerable evidence shows that one of the most damaging experiences for children is exposure to violence in any form (Isaacs, 2010, cited in Savahl et al., 2013, p. 2) which can lead to many negative psychosocial outcomes, including violent behavior, depression, and low self-esteem (Savahl et al., 2013, p. 2). High levels of violence cause communities to become highly dysfunctional, resulting in neglect and increased violence. Neglect and violence in communities have become an epidemic as well as endemic, leaving children with emotional scars that can cause them to harden and become angry (Twemlow & Sacco, 1998, p. 505), and potentially developing emotional and behavioral problems (Sieger et al., 2004, p. 245). These problems include fear, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and delinquent behavior.

Children are more vulnerable than adults and more likely to develop psychopathology in one form or other. Regular exposure to violence increases this risk more than children who are not regularly exposed to violence (Sieger et al., 2004, p. 245). Sieger et al. (2004) found in previous studies exposure to community violence increases a child’s risk for cognitive impairment, as well as emotional distress (pp. 245-246), which can affect physical and emotional health, and may impair school and social functioning (Benjamin & Crawford-Browne, 2010), as well as long-term developmental problems, including depression, trauma-related symptoms and low self-esteem (Rosewater, 2003, p. 5; Mazza & Overstreet, 2000, p. 88).

In an American study of adolescents aged 12-17 years (the National Survey of Adolescents), it was found that community violence had been witnessed by nearly half of

boys and more than a third of the girls who participated (Kilpatrick et al., 2003 cited in Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008, p. 296), while the National Youth Survey (a study of 1 725 adolescents) found that 70% of adolescent participants had been victims of violent crime (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2002, cited in Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008, p. 297). In addition to these emotional problems, exposure to community violence leads to the development of behavioral problems in the youth, including aggression and delinquency (Kennedy & Ceballo, 2014, p. 70).

When regularly exposed to violence, children's well-being, sense of self, and sense of safety are compromised (Savahl et al., 2013, p. 4). Fear, stress, PTSD, lowered self-esteem, depression (Ngqela & Lewis, 2012, p. 89), suicidality, fighting, school-related problems, internalized behaviors, substance abuse (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008, p. 300), emotional desensitization, and antisocial disorder are some of the serious consequences of exposure to violence (Savahl, et al., 2010, p. 11). Ward et al. (2001) found that these victims and witnesses suffer poorer outcomes later in life due to the development of behavioral disorders and poor school performance (p. 300). Osofsky (1995), cited in Garbinarino (2001) explains that biochemical changes occur in a child's brain because of exposure to violence, and these changes impair the child's academic and social behavior (p. 368). Significant psychological problems can result, which can lead to problems with appropriate social behavior as well as learning problems, and these are likely to interfere with parent-child relationships (Garbinarino, 2001, p. 368). Aisenberg & Herrenkohl (2008) found further evidence that being exposed to repetitive community violence can lead to cognitive delays, which in turn can lead to poor academic performance, failure at school (p. 300), stimulus sensitivity, and very low expectations of the future (Garbinarino, 2001, p. 368).

Numerous studies have found that community violence poses a major risk factor for the development of behavioral and emotional problems in the youth (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008, p. 297). Resorting to violence later in life is one of these behavioral and emotional problems. Buka and Colleagues (2001) cited in Aisenberg & Herrenkohl (2008), in a review of various studies, have been able to link exposure to community of violence early in life and the use of aggression and violence later in life (p. 300-301), with Margdin & Gardis's (2000) research showing similar findings (p. 300). Savahl et al. (2010) cited in Savahl, et al. (2013) found that the psychological response to violence can be blunted by continuous exposure to violence (p. 11).

When children perceive their neighborhoods as being unsafe it has been found that they are suspicious of police, have lower perceived self-confidence, and low internal locus of control (Savahl et al., 2013, p. 4). Exposure to violence daily does not allow the child time to recover or learn healthy alternatives (Stavrou, 1993, p. 8). Studies have shown that children who are exposed to continual violence are more prone to adopt violent behavior themselves (Stavrou, 1993, p. 12; Rosewater, 2003, p. 6), and are more likely to develop abnormal reactions to non-verbal cues, often misinterpreting these cues and perceiving them as threats (Benjamin & Crawford-Browne, 2010, p. 20), with minor incidents triggering aggressive or violent behavior. Drawing on previous studies, Rosewater (2003) found that being subjected to violence early in childhood is a predictor of later perpetration of domestic violence (p. 6).

After a survey,⁴ it was revealed that about a third (32%) of children who witnessed violence at any stage of their lives engaged in aberrant behavior at a later stage, compared to only 6.5% of boys who did not witness any crimes (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008).

Aisenberg and Herrenkohl (2008) found that a consequence of repetitive exposure to

⁴ The national survey of adolescents was a study conducted on the effects of violence on children in the United States of America with 1 725 adolescents.

community violence is an increased risk that children will turn their negative behaviour, e.g. aggression, to the external environment (p. 300). Garbinarino (2001) believes that exposure to violence affects or changes a child's "social maps" and their conclusions about the world (p. 365). Totten (2003) found that youth abusers felt that their behavior was not wrong and believed their values to be on a superior moral plane (p. 78). The use of violence is normalized by promoting it as a way to solve problems (Ngqela & Lewis, 2012, p. 90). This finding is concerning and shows that what is considered a violent community, violence is normalized, and people cannot imagine safe spaces. A healthy sense of well-being for children is dependent on security, and if a child does not feel secure anywhere, including in their mind, this violates the child's psychological needs.

According to Ward et al. (2001), there is a significant link between a child's subjective sense of safety and regular exposure to violence (p. 300), while Garbinarino (2001) has found that children do not feel safe (p. 365). When exposed to trauma, the very meaning of the child's life is challenged, leading to the re-evaluation of the meaning and purpose of life as well as their spirituality, which can be particularly difficult for children (Garbinarino, 2001, p. 369). When children do not feel safe and are subjected to violence it can lead to mental health challenges which include difficulty with self-regulation, PTSD, anger, withdrawal, and substance abuse problems.

South African children living in black townships are exposed to an environment where there is a high rate of destructive behavior due to their general poor living conditions, lack of caregivers with sufficient parenting skills, and also a high proportion of absent parents (Ngqela & Lewis, 2012, p. 90). Aisenberg and Herrenkohl (2008) found that living in disadvantaged neighborhoods exposes children to high levels of violence, creating fewer opportunities for prosocial models and positive relationships (p. 299). Other factors, such as low income, father-absent homes, parental psychopathology, and unemployment may further

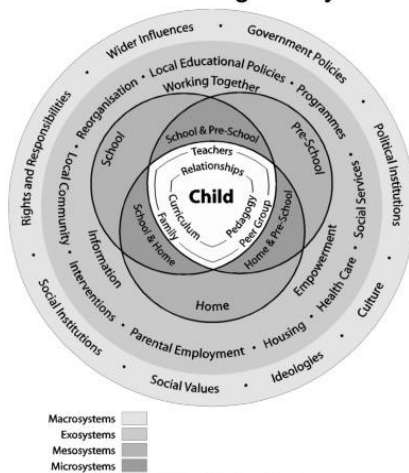
exacerbate the effects of community violence on children (Garbarino, 2001 cited in Sieger, 2004, p. 245). Such children feel helpless and develop feelings of worthlessness, together with a craving for constant reassurance and gratification, which can lead to anger and eventually violence (Ngqela & Lewis, 2012, p. 90). International and local research has identified community violence as a factor that critically affects a child's well-being (Savahl et al., 2013, p. 2). In South Africa levels of violence among young people are extraordinarily high and provides evidence of a moral crisis and lawlessness (Swartz and Scott, 2013, p. 325). However, as Benjamin and Crawford-Browne (2010) point out, some children in such communities may exhibit traits of resilience, post-trauma growth, and adaptation responses (p. 24).

Theoretical Foundations

In terms of Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1917-2005) Ecological Systems theory, the child, as well as his environment influence growth and development. According to Bronfenbrenner, the child's world is made up of five interacting systems (Swick & Williams, 2006, p. 371):

- 1) Microsystem
- 2) Mesosystem
- 3) Exosystem
- 4) Macrosystem
- 5) Chronosystem

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory



Fabian, H., & Dunlop, A. W. A. (Eds.) (2002). *Transitions in the Early Years. Debating continuity and progression for children in early education*. London: Routledge Falmer.

Figure 4

The cultural environment in which the child resides is called the macrosystem. Prevailing cultural values, public policies, health, and laws are all considered to be part of this system. Even though the child has little freedom in determining his or her own cultural values, the prevailing values and belief system exert a direct influence on the child. The social structures and activities that occur in the immediate system level are determined by the macrosystem – the “social blueprint” (Bronfenbrenner, 1994 cited in Hong & Espelage, 2010, p. 317). The last system is the chronosystem, which consists of environmental and sociohistorical events that occur throughout the child’s lifetime. This theoretical construction posits that the roles, norms, and rules of each system shape the child’s psychological development. It is proposed by Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) that through interpersonal connections and action with the social environment, human psychological development occurs. The family and home usually provide the primary socialization of the child, while peers, school, and the media provide the secondary socialization (Ngqela & Lewis, 2012, p. 90).

Problems at home, such as alcoholism, drug, and spousal abuse, and unemployment, all affect the microsystem of the child. The child is in direct contact with these issues on a daily basis. Bullying and violence at school also directly affect the microsystem of the child. The effects of community violence, which forms part of the child's exosystem, trickle down through the different systems, affecting the child in various ways. The cultural values and ideologies from the macrosystem influence the exosystem, thereby influencing community violence and thus trickling down through the other systems affecting the development of the child. People's behavior is influenced by cultural values and ideologies, and through this context of culture, coercion of others is often the purpose of aggressive behavior (Hong & Espelage, 2010, p. 317). A community, country's political or social history plays a large role in the development of their particular community's cultural values as well as ideologies. This forms the child's chronosystem, which indirectly influences all other systems in the child's world, thereby affecting the child's development. Violence in any of these systems either directly or indirectly affects a child's development.

The contextual nature of a person's life influences each system (Swick & Williams, 2003, p. 371). The immediate environment of the child makes up the microsystem, which includes immediate and personal relationships or organizations the child interacts with, such as family, peers, and caregivers, for example, school, home, and day-care. These relationships are bi-directional, with each person's actions and reactions affecting the other. The mesosystem is made up of various interactions the child has with people in the different microsystems (Hong & Espelage, 2010, p. 317). Elements in the environment that indirectly influence the child's development form part of the exosystem. The exosystem indirectly affects the child as its influence "trickles down" through the different systems through the individuals influencing the child's life.

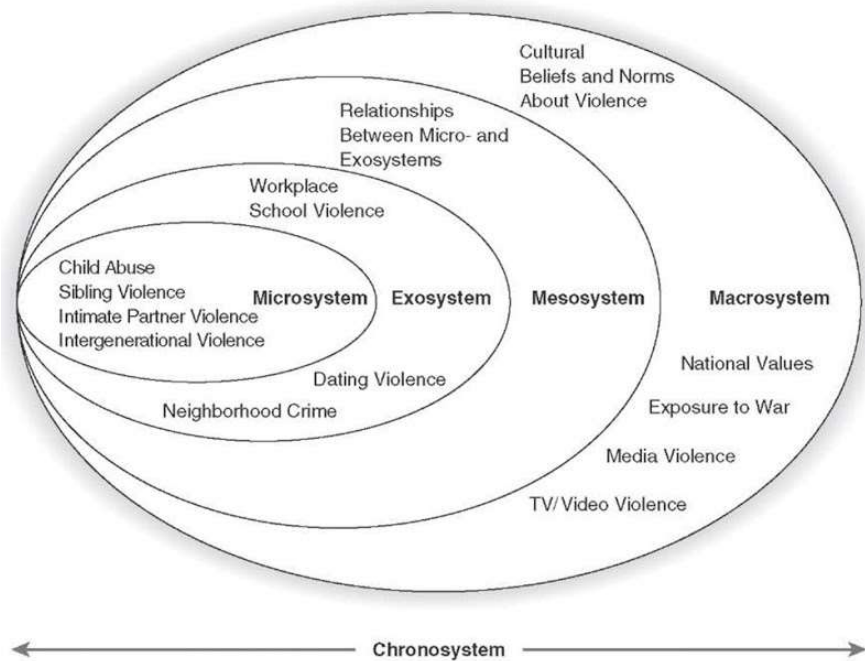


Figure 5

A social constructivist paradigm was used for this study. Social constructivists believe that, instead of a singular reality, there are multiple, constructed realities (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 129). Reality is subjective for social constructivists and is influenced by situations, experiences, and perceptions. Any research into social phenomena (such as community violence) will also be shaped by the way in which the research subject/s and researcher interact with each other. Social constructivism holds that reality is socially constructed for individuals, groups, and communities (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 129).

Understanding the meaning of human existence is the main goal of the social constructivist researcher (Mojtahed et al., 2014 p. 87) from the perspectives of people who experience it daily (Schwandt, 2000, cited in Ponterotto, 2005, p. 129). Lived experiences are constantly being shaped by social interaction (Mojtahed et al., 2014, p. 87). We do not acquire knowledge: we create knowledge through the creation of meaning (Ertmer & Newby, 2013, p. 55). Constructivists believe that individuals filter input received from the world and create their own individual, unique understandings of reality (Ertmer & Newby, 2013, p. 55).

An important implication of social constructivism is that people do not simply live realities determined by other people: they construct their own realities from observing others and cognitively applying meaning to these observations. From this point of view, it follows that children can learn aggressive behavior by observing others and applying meaning to these observations. However, children can also learn other alternatives to aggressive behavior by observing others and this study explores whether karate can facilitate such behavior changes.

The importance of effective intervention strategies

As mentioned in the previous section, the negative developmental effects of continual exposure to violence on children can be extreme and can include psychiatric disorders, developmental disabilities, and various other psychological and functional issues (Berkowitz, 2003, p. 293). Berkowitz (2003) argues that as a result of a significant number of children exposed to violence daily, which leads to cognitive, social and health deficits, is compelling evidence that “exposure to violence is one of the leading health issues in the nation and the world” (p. 294). These problems may include negative behavior, social, cognitive, and emotional maladaptation, and possibly even psychopathology (Osofsky, 2003, p. 162). This type of turmoil in a child’s life may spill out into the child’s surroundings (Ford, 2002, cited in Berkowitz, 2003, p. 294).

Osofsky (2003) has found consistent evidence that some of the determinant factors in how a child psychologically reacts to trauma and violence include proximity to the violence, how well the child knows the victim and/or perpetrator, the child’s developmental stage and temperament, and support available (p. 165). Children who have witnessed violence or been victims themselves experience elevated stress levels (Osofsky, 2003, p. 165). Unfortunately, the levels of violence in South African communities are escalating (Walker et al., 1996, p. 194). Through observing violence in communities, children are taught that violence is an

effective way to settle disputes, violence in the home is normal for family life, the violent family member does not get punished and violence is an acceptable way to control other people (Osofsky, 2003, p. 165). Children learn how to apply violence through constant exposure (Margolin, 1998, cited in Osofsky, 2003, p. 165), rationalizing the use of violence and possibly viewing it as an acceptable, or possibly the only, way to resolve conflicts (Osofsky, 2003, p. 166). An ecological perspective shows that one of the effects of continual exposure to violence is that children learn that violence is an acceptable way to act towards others (Osofsky, 2003, p. 166).

National experts in public health, delinquency, gangs, and youth violence believe that the escalating phenomenon of youth violence cannot be combatted by what they call society's "incarceration frenzy", incarcerating youth after the fact (Fagan, 1996, cited in Walker et al., 1996, p. 195). Violence and exposure to it is an alarming constant in daily life, therefore primary prevention strategies are an essential part of the public health resources (Berkowitz, 2003, p. 294).

Humans are socially orientated individuals whose behavior is affected by their cultural experiences (Chavis, 2012, p. 55). Youths learn behavior patterns by observing the criminal and deviant behaviors of others, as well as any consequences for these actions (Hartinger-Saunders & Rine, 2011, p. 911). Children play in the streets, with little or no supervision, watching and learning from the older youth (Bronkovic, 2012, p. 25). Through family, home conditions, and exposure to the community, children are socialized into particular behavioral patterns which become a permanent feature in their lifestyle (Walker et al., 1996, p. 196). Besides the biological basis for behavior, children also learn how to respond emotionally to other, situations and how to act from others in their social environment (Dahlberg & Potter, 2001, p. 7). Bronfenbrenner (1986) cited in Osofsky (2003) explains that parenting does not just occur dyadically, but in a broader context of multiple

relationships (p. 162), with children learning not only from their parents but from different environments created unconsciously by family and other caretakers (Dahlberg & Potter, 2001, p. 7). Sykes and Cullen (1992) cited in Walker et al. (1996) found a body of research to show that, as well as long-term exposure to crime and criminal behavior and cultures, a lack of social support plays a key role in crime (p. 205).

A common recurring theme in previous studies is the importance and power of resilience. Some authors do not define resilience, but merely discuss it as an outcome or a process (Sabina & Banyard, 2015, p. 337). Masten (2014) broadly defines resilience as “the capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten system function, viability or development” (p. 6). Researching resilience in the field of violence has shown several positive factors that help reduce negative functioning, including education, emotional intelligence, self-esteem, hope, and optimism (Sabina & Banyard, 2015, p. 338). Other secondary protective factors include club involvement, school safety, and social support (Sabina & Banyard, 2015, p. 338).

According to Berkowitz (2003), the prevention of psychiatric and functional disabilities by engaging children and families before symptoms develop is the primary goal of intervention programs (p. 297). Dempsey (2002) cited in Sieger et al. (2004) contends that an environment of trust needs to be the primary objective of effective therapeutic interventions (p. 248). The general assumption in intervention programs is that the violent event is a once-off occurrence. This is, however, most often not the case. Interventions should focus on teaching effective coping strategies, developing a healthy self-esteem, and various other protective strategies (Mazza & Overstreet, 2000, p. 97). Burt and Butler (2011) believe there is a need for a culturally sensitive and affordable program, which should target learners as early as possible (p. 53).

Engaging children and their families early on create opportunities for ongoing follow-up contact and monitoring of issues that may affect functioning and symptoms (Berkowitz, 2003, p. 297). One of the biggest influences on positive youth development has been found to be family functioning. However, the term “family” does not apply only to parents, but to the way the youth self-defined family (McDonald et al., 2011, p. 929). Young people may define “family” as their aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, stepparents, etc. In the White Paper on Families in South Africa 2013 family is defined as “a societal group that is related by blood (kinship), adoption, foster care or the ties of marriage (civil, customary, or religious), civil union or cohabitation, and go beyond a particular physical residence” (Department of Social Development, 2013, p. 11). Early intervention can help stop aggressive behavior, help improve school attendance (Totten, 2003, p. 87), aid in dealing with problems faster, and provide someone the youth can talk to in order to make sense of their everyday lives and experiences (Fowler et al., 2009, p. 252-253). Having a positive role model whom children can talk to helps reduce stress, can encourage healthier behaviors, leads to feelings of being needed and a general sense of well-being. Osofsky (2003) proposes that intervention and prevention should be based on an ecological systems model, utilizing support and resources from different societal groups who have an influence on the child’s life, including school and police, as these groups are more likely to have positive long-term impacts on children exposed to violence (p. 168).

Theory and research have shown that children learn patterns of behavior by exposure to these specific behaviors, therefore supporting the theory of behavioral interventions (Cohen et al., 2006, p. 749). Support from social relationships, social networks, and various community institutions is a vitally important intervention tool (Walker et al., 1996, p. 205) to be used in conjunction with other interventions. Walker et al. (1996) believe beliefs and attitudes towards the implementation of more socially supportive intervention strategies by

society and schools need to change to include a broader range of strategies, including family management strategies, more positive community influences, safer school environments, and greater social support (p. 205).

By incorporating intervention programs into schools, children may learn coping skills that will determine how they deal with neighborhood violence (Greenberg et al., 2003, cited in Fowler et al., 2009, p. 252). Fowler et al. (2009) believe that parents, teachers, religious affiliates, and other important adults in the child's life can be trained, with the use of prevention programs, to identify symptoms associated with exposure to trauma, provide a trusted person that the youth may speak to regarding this trauma as well as facilitating rapid responses (p. 252-253).

Totten (2003) believes that mentoring programs can help high-risk youth successfully transition into adulthood (p. 88). Designing programs targeting risk factors poses several challenges, as there are a number of different risk factors that influence aggression and violence (Dahlberg & Potter, 2001, p. 11). These can include factors within the individual child, in the family as well as other members of the community and social environment (Dahlberg and Potter, 2001, p. 11). Dahlberg and Potter (2001) maintain that designing comprehensive preventative programs targeting systems that shape cognition, beliefs, development, and behavior, as well as social factors, is integral to addressing multiple risk factors (p. 11).

In his study on the effects of Taekwondo, Tadesse (2015) found a marked increase in the subjective well-being of the students in the program compared with non-students (p. 79). Lakes and Hoyt (2004) found that there are huge benefits of martial arts training within the psychosocial domain, including behavioral benefits (p. 285). Martial arts have been associated with many positive socio-psychological and personal outcomes (Theeboom et al., 2009, p. 21).

Unless action is taken, children will continue to suffer these negative consequences and society will be diminished as a result (Berkowitz, 2003, p. 294). Children have not yet been taught how to behave appropriately with peers and adults or how to substitute maladaptive behaviors with adaptive ones (Walker et al., 1996, p. 197). Walker et al. (1996) recommend that children have to be taught skills they can use in the home, school, and other social settings while receiving feedback regarding their efforts (p. 197). They believe that norms and expectations about aggressive attitudes, behaviors as well as how the children relate to one another, need to be changed before these maladaptive behaviors become the norm for them (Walker et al., 1996, p. 195). Designing intervention programs to interrupt the negative effects of exposure to violence is vitally important given the rate of exposure to violence as well as its impact on children's developmental outcomes (Berkowitz, 2003, p. 293).

Bronkovic (2012) examined violence in the narrative of a 20-year-old man and found that "the language used to describe how they took a different path from violence indicates the influence of community associations they joined in boyhood". According to Buvinic et al. (1999), "it is easier to prevent learning of aggression in the first place than to promote its unlearning" (p. 34). It is of utmost importance that we engage in dialogue that addresses attitudes towards all forms of violence and behavior that can lead to violence, including aggression, mean-spiritedness, teasing, bullying, and antisocial behavior (Walker et al., 1996, p. 195).

Karate as an intervention strategy

Karate has a complicated and extended history, stemming from ancient myths and legends, and surviving historical revolutions. Due to a lack of records and the secrecy surrounding the arts, it is difficult to trace the exact evolution of karate. Despite popular belief, Asia is not necessarily the birthplace of all karate. Karate originated in many different

countries, including China, India, Japan, Israel, Brazil, and Cambodia. Some of today's most prominent karate is, however, a combination of more than one karate culture, for example, Brazilian JiuJitsu (*Blackbelt magazine*, 23 June 2018). Some of the oldest disciplines are thought to be over 5 000 years old. Karate training comprises not only physical techniques and exercises but also mental discipline, self-defense, and spiritual growth.

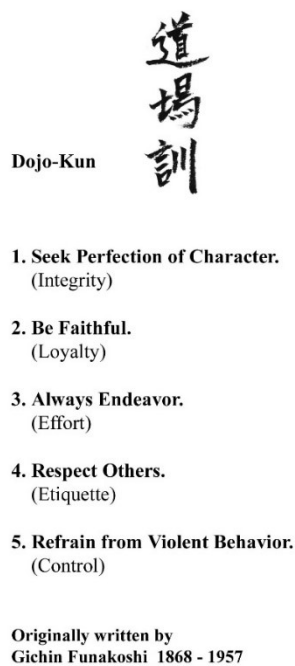


Figure 6

The underlying values of karate are based on a pacifist philosophy abhorring conflict. This is illustrated by Funakoshi Gichin's famous saying: "there is no first attack in Karate" (*Karate ni senti nashi*) (Martin, 2006, p. 2). The underlying code of karate, Bushido (literally translated "the way of the warrior") consists of values and principles that are considered positive, which include courage, benevolence, honesty, honor, respect, rectitude, and loyalty. Twemlow et al. (2008) believe that "the ultimate aim of the art of karate lies not in victory or defeat, but in the perfection of the character of its participants" (p. 2). The founder and father of modern-day karate, Funakoshi Gichin, emphasizes characteristics such as courage,

kindness, honesty, humility, and self-control as being fundamental to the karate practitioner (Cynarski, 2012, p. 1).

Developing a well-balanced mind and body through training in fighting techniques is the main purpose of traditional karate. Budo and traditional karate share their main aim, which is the cultivation of the human characteristics that value peace over violence, preferring to stop a fight before it occurs (International Karate Federation). Besides physical training, elements such as humility, manners, etiquette, calm, and discipline are also included in the training program. The style of the gentle warrior of ancient legends is promoted through the philosophies and code of conduct in karate training (Twemlow et al., 2008, p. 3). The same basic principles, such as respect to senior students, instructors and parents as well as respect for peers, consideration for the weak, fellow students, perseverance and integrity, are shared by each martial arts school, even though each school follows their own unique philosophies (Martin, 2006, p. 2). Physical aspects of combat are combined with strategy, philosophy, and tradition to promote a more thoughtful approach to conflict instead of a purely physical reaction (Green, 2001, cited in Tadesse, 2015, p. 73). Karate also aims to develop a respectful attitude (Zivin et al., 2001, p. 456), as well as providing an instructor who is an exemplar of restraint, exhibits model behavior, and is a role model and mentor for the students to follow. The purpose of the training is to not only challenge the student physically but intellectually, creating positive benefits including self-confidence, concentration, strength, and stress management (Dupler & Frey, 2005 as cited in Goldsmith, 2013, p. 12).

Pressures on families have greatly increased due to modern lifestyles put a great deal of pressure on families and often lead to absent fathers and positive role models, with the increased pressure often manifesting in behavioral issues, especially among adolescent boys (Martin, 2006, p. 4). Adolescence is a developmental period when the child transitions into

adulthood and is fraught with a variety of changes; emotional, physical, intellectual, behavioral as well as social changes (Nggela & Lewis, 2012, p. 89, Tadesse, 2015, p. 73). If these are not handled properly, they can lead to a myriad of problems, which include aggression, mood swings, suicidality, and risk-taking behaviors, and threaten the well-being of the adolescent (Tadesse, 2015, p. 73). It is of paramount importance for adolescents, families, and communities, and for the general and future well-being of adults, that adolescents successfully adapt to these transitional changes to adulthood (Tadesse, 2015, p. 180). The concept of well-being is defined as “a state of successful performance throughout the life course integrating physical, cognitive and socio-emotional function that results in productive activities deemed significant by one’s cultural community, fulfilling social relationships and the ability to transcend moderate psychosocial and environmental problems” (Pollard-Rosenberg, 2003, p. 2). Well-being is a multi-dimensional construct, which encompasses several spheres, such as psychological, physical, economic, educational, and physical (Savahl et al., 2013, p. 2). Tadesse (2015) conducted a study using Taekwondo and found that regular training positively impacts the subjective well-being of adolescents (p. 80).

The central theory of this dissertation is that in karate, the emphasis on perfection of character can help young people deal with the demands of modern life. Youths are exposed to many risk factors during adolescence, including alcohol, drugs, tobacco, and violent or sexually risky behaviors. Many adolescents experience minor exposure to such risk, which does not necessarily result in negative outcomes: however, high exposure to such risk increases an adolescent’s chances of negative developmental outcomes, which influence attitudes, well-being, academic performance, family and peer relationships, and increasing risk of victimization (Willoughby et al., 2007). While training in karate students develop a connection to self by developing a strong relationship with the Sensei, developing respect for

self and others, and a sense of responsibility (Martin, 2006, p. 2). It was found in studies that the wholesome family setting of karate dojos is an image that men are willing to identify with (Channon, 2010, p. 14). An open system of continuity and belonging is created in the dojo due to the relationship with the instructor and the history and traditions practiced in the dojo (Twemlow et al., 2002, p. 23). Findings in previous studies regarding positive adult role models influencing boys show it is not necessarily a parental figure who is present at home but the global family functions of communication, roles, problem-solving, involvement, and behavior control, that make a difference (McDonald et al., 2011, p. 929). Being part of a karate dojo, a child becomes part of a self-defined family, outside the immediate family setting, providing alternative positive role models other than parents and caregivers.

During my review of the literature, I noticed a gap in the literature regarding girls and violence. In general, most studies on violence focuses on the effects it has on boys. There is very little on the effects it may have on girls. Further studies should be conducted into how exposure to violence may negatively affect girls as well as boys, as girls are exposed just as much to violence as boys are.

Literature shows empirical evidence of the positive psychosocial consequences of martial arts training, most of which are subtle and not overt (Martin, 2006, p. 2), with researchers discovering favorable effects such as a stronger sense of obligation, independence, kindness, courage, and strengthening of family ties (Kusnierz & Bartik, 2014, p. 21). Studies found an improvement in cognitive self-regulation in children who are training in karate, as well as improved conduct in the classroom, with boys showing greater improvement than girls (Lakes & Hoyt, 2004, p. 4), as well as improved task completion and mastery orientation in both boys and girls (Twemlow et al., 2008, p. 9). A link has been found in research between karate and self-regulation, which is a highly adaptive trait that enables people to evaluate and change their response and behavior in a situation (Baumeister

et al., 2006, p. 1773). Self-regulation aids in the reduction of self-destructive behavior and increases a person's capacity for success (Lakes & Hoyt, 2004, p. 299).

Movies and popular culture have portrayed various forms of martial arts, including karate in ways that have led to a misconception that long-term karate training promotes violence and violent behavior (Martin, 2006, p. 1). Karate teaches the art of fighting, and movies such as *Kill Bill* (dir. Tarantino, 2003) and *Streetfighter* (dir. De Souza, 1994) portray the sport as bloody and very aggressive, with senseless fighting and killing. Bandura's (1971) Social Learning Theory posits that teaching children to use their bodies to hurt someone physically, by punching and kicking, could teach these children to use violence in other situations. Bandura et al. (1961) showed in their famous Bobo doll study that aggression is learned through imitation of violent behavior, and therefore it is believed that aggressive behavior should increase with karate training. This study, however, is outdated. Karate training is based on the philosophy of the "warrior's pathway", a moral code for improving the fighter's character and personality (Cynarski, 2012, p. 1). A study conducted by Zivin et al. (2001) showed positive effects within 30 sessions, and they believe that there is strong evidence that requiring at-risk youth to participate in karate will help reduce the personal characteristics associated with violence and delinquency, as well as reducing violent behavior (p. 456). In their study consisting of 60 boys they found that, if taken as part of a middle school experience, karate resulted in positive outcomes, including a decrease in violence (Zivin et al., 2001, p. 5).

As a child learns self-control strategies while learning karate, they show improved behavioral flexibility and adaptability, leading to more effective management of aggressive responses when provoked: they engage less in aggressive behavior in the future (Hernandez & Anderson, 2015, p. 169). A study conducted by Trulson (1986) with 34 juvenile

delinquents who were selected based on their MMPI⁵ scores found that after six months the traditionally trained group showed significantly lowered aggressiveness, as well as normalized MMPI scores (Twemlow, 2008, p. 8). The control group showed no significant differences in aggressiveness. Woodward (2009) surveyed the existing research and concluded that karate does not promote violence (p. 41). The development of a centered, calm, discriminating mind is the aim of karate, and the application of this to all areas in life aims to create the antithesis of an aggressive mindset (Zivin et al., 2001, p. 2), becoming an effective form of psychotherapy, and building up their self-worth to aid in the control of aggressive impulses (Martin, 2006, p. 3). Twemlow (2008) reports that karate and movement in general appear to be useful in reducing violence and trauma associated with it (p. 9). Four studies of the personality traits of martial artists suggest that karate training might provide a cathartic release of hostility, creating better control over anxiety and hostility in more advanced practitioners (Rothpearls, 1980, cited in Twemlow, 2008, p. 8).

Not many studies have been done on karate programs, but those that have, show that the longer the student trains and the higher the belt ranking achieved, the higher the levels of self-reliance in the student, the more improved the self-esteem, and the greater the reduction in aggression (Woodward, 2009, p. 41). Tadesse (2015) mentions that their study on Taekwondo on the subjective well-being of adolescents in Adis Ababa was the first of its kind (p. 80). This study showed the subjective well-being of adolescents was positively influenced by Taekwondo training (Tadesse, 2015, p. 80). Karate training can teach coping mechanisms that can be used in other situations, foster positive attachments, and aid in the development of specific skills that can help transform destructive aggressiveness into self-confidence (Hernandez and Anderson, 2015, p. 170). Research carried out by Supinski

⁵ The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) is a clinical assessment tool used to help diagnose mental health disorders. It is the most widely used and researched assessment tool. Previous research has looked at the relationship between certain personality characteristics and future problem behaviours. The MMPI can help identify certain characteristics that are risk factors for future problem behaviour (Lee, 2017, p. 1).

(2005) shows that after six months of kickboxing training, aggression levels in young people had decreased significantly (Kusnierz & Bartik, 2014, p. 20).

In situations where violent aggression is being enacted, the presence of bystanders, who often passively enjoy the humiliation of a victim, plays a role in fuelling aggressive behavior (Twemlow, 2008, p. 25). The karate dojo demands respect, abhors social humiliation, and creates a space where the bystander is expected to play a supportive role, and all students are encouraged and supported by their fellow students (Twemlow, 2008, p. 24). Biggs et al. (2008) found in their study that aggression was lowered and helpful by standing increased among young boys who participated in regular karate training (Hernandez & Anderson, 2015, p. 170). Students are motivated by their instructors to work with and pay attention to their training partners (Twemlow, 2008, p. 26), fostering cooperation with others. These skills can be transferred to everyday life. Adding therapeutic principles such as empathy, unconditional positive regard, caring, high expectations, and meaningful social participation, to the active movement of karate training can be a helpful tool in convincing children who are prone to aggressive behavior to consider a lifestyle change (Burt & Butler, 2011, p. 52).

Constant exposure to community violence leads to many risk factors among the youth. These risk factors lead to negative future outcomes. However, these risk factors can be converted into protective factors by exposing the youth regularly to karate training. The positive benefits of karate training lead to the youth developing protective factors such as self-worth, confidence, discipline, positive self-regard, and helpful by standing. Protective factors lead to resilience, which in turn helps youth make better choices and these bring about more positive future outcomes. Resilience is defined as “a process that involves positive adaptation despite exposure to adversity or significant stress” (Copeland-Linder et al., 2010, p. 176). In the following chapter, I will explain the theoretical perspective used in this

research project, which underlies my understanding of how people learn behavior, and how to potentially change this behavior if it is maladaptive. I will also explain the methods followed to answer my research questions.

In the next chapter, I will be discussing the methodology behind this study. I will be expanding on my research questions. I will also provide details on the research participants and why they were chosen for this particular study. I will also explain the methodology used to analyze the data collected during the research process.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, I will be discussing the methodology behind this study. I will be expanding on my research questions. I will also provide details on the research participants and why they were chosen for this particular study. I will also explain the data collection methods, procedures followed by myself when conducting the interviews as well as the methodology used to analyze the data collected during the research process.

My initial research question is whether karate training can serve as an effective intervention for reducing violence among communities. This question was based on the following research questions:

- What are the participants' perceptions of violence after a karate intervention program?
- Based on this study, can karate training change preconceived ideas of violence?

In this chapter, I will narrate and explain the steps followed to explore my theory on the benefits of karate. To answer the research questions, I selected a single case study, located in a traditional Karate school situated in Kwanonqaba, a low-resource community in Mossel Bay. The reason this school was chosen is that the students who train there are from many different communities and areas in the greater Mossel Bay area. These students come from many different areas, backgrounds, and socio-economic statuses. A number of these students are exposed daily to different levels of community or school violence. Another reason this school was chosen was for convenience and safety. These karate classes are given at night, and they are in areas with higher crime rates. I had to visit the dojo alone at night and did not feel comfortable or safe enough to travel to the next closest karate class, which is situated 50km away. This particular class is the only one in the greater Mossel Bay area that teaches traditional karate, which is the focus of this study. Some others teach more modern styles of martial arts such as kickboxing and mixed martial arts which did not fall within the

scope of this study. In order to answer the research questions posed above, I chose a qualitative research design to gain an in-depth understanding of the participant's views and experiences.

Karate philosophy teaches a gentler way of dealing with issues than through physical violence, namely the way of the gentle warrior. Specific moral values or codes are taught to students and the students are expected to adhere to these values and codes. Shotokan Karate-Do founder, Gichin Funakoshi (1868-1957), laid down 20 Precepts of Karate which had to be followed and adhered to by all karateka (students). These principles include the following:

1. Seek Perfection of Character
(Integrity)
2. Be Faithful
(Loyal)
3. Always Endeavor
(Effort)
4. Respect Others
(Etiquette)
5. Refrain from Violent Behaviour
(Control) (Funakoshi)

Gichin Funakoshi also emphasized qualities such as “courage, kindness, honesty, humility, and self-control” (Cynarski, 2012, p. 1). Violent adolescents who join a Karate program must be encouraged by that program’s philosophy to work towards the following goals:

- “A commitment to a respectful attitude / kindness / self-protection through non-violence”

- “Commitment to leadership through non-judgmental role modeling / virtuous behavior/altruistic service to others”
- “Commitment to try hard/stay healthy/learn to overcome fear/possessiveness and develop confidence/exercise restraint in the face of provocation” (Twemlow & Sacco, 1998, p. 510).

The underlying values of karate are based on a pacifist philosophy, abhorring conflict. This is illustrated by Funakoshi Gichin’s famous quote: “there is no first attack in Karate (*Karate ni senti nashi*)” (Martin, 2006, p.2). The underlying code of karate, Bushido (literally translated “the way of the warrior”) consists of values and principles that are considered by society to be positive. These values and principles include “courage, benevolence, honesty, honor, respect, rectitude and loyalty” (Nitobe, 1905, cited in Martin, 2006, p. 2). According to Shoto, “The ultimate aim of karate lies not in victory or defeat, but in the perfection of the character of its participants” (Shoto, 1975, cited in Twemlow et al., 2008, p. 2).

Through training, a karate student learns the true implications of using violence, and the consequences that follow. A respectful attitude and frame of mind are taught by positive mentors and role models via the Sensei. The term Sensei means a teacher or instructor of Karate. These mentors can help guide the youth into approaching the curve balls life may throw at them more productively and aid them towards becoming successful and thriving adults.

Research Design

For this study, I chose a qualitative research design. Qualitative research is used to represent and understand the actions and experiences of people as they experience and live their daily lives (Elliott et al., 1999, p. 216). Aspects of a person’s life, such as culture, language, and family history is taken into consideration when trying to understand the particulars of the human experience and social life (including discourse) of the individual in

the various situations studied, as well as the researchers (Elliott et al., 1999, p. 217).

Qualitative research methods allowed the researcher the opportunity to listen to the stories of the participants.

The word “paradigm” was first used by Kuhn in 1962 and originated from the Greek word “*paradeigma*”, which means pattern, and can be used to mean either approach or design (Atieno, 2009, p. 13). A paradigm is a conceptual framework that provides researchers with an in-depth guide to conduct their research (Kuhn, 1962, cited in Atieno, 2009, p. 13). According to Kuhn (1962), a research paradigm is “the set of common beliefs and agreements shared between scientists about how problems should be understood and addressed” (Kuhn, 1962).

Broadly, there are two research methods used in research, namely qualitative design and quantitative design. The qualitative design looks into uncountable phenomena, such as individual motives, perceptions, and narratives, while quantitative research typically focuses on phenomena that can be quantified. The phenomena studied in a particular community and the research methodology chosen to study these phenomena are determined by the paradigm the researcher chooses (Tuli, 2010, p. 102). Every researcher has a theoretical orientation or paradigm from which he or she works, whether they are conscious of this or not (Tuli, 2010, p. 102). This is based on their particular worldview about the nature of knowledge and reality, which aids in clarifying their theoretical framework (Cohen et al., 2000).

Researchers in social science use different research methodologies (quantitative and qualitative methodologies) as they study complex and diverse phenomena, ranging from census data derived from populations of hundreds of thousands, in-depth analysis of an individual’s social life, monitoring happenings on the street on any particular day, to historical analysis of happenings from hundreds of years ago (Tuli, 2010, p. 98). Until recently most research was concerned with investigating phenomena that could be observed

and measured and were undertaken using the quantitative research methodology (Tuli, 2010, p. 98). It was believed that this methodology was the only way to make observations and measurements objectively and that the process of gathering data could be repeated by other researchers (Tuli, 2010, p. 98).

Qualitative research design studies people in their natural environments and is known in some circles as the socio-anthropological research paradigm and is interpretive in nature (Atieno, 2009, p. 13). While qualitative research is based on how the world is experienced by different individuals, the quantitative research paradigm is based more on a scientific paradigm (Atieno, 2009, p. 13). Differences in ontological and epistemological assumptions form the main differences between qualitative and quantitative research paradigms (Atieno, 2009, p. 14). Atieno (2009) believes that an issue in research is that some scholars do not acknowledge the value of both paradigms and do not recognize that, even though many researchers hold different epistemological and ontological assumptions, both quantitative and qualitative methods can be used to answer or investigate “almost any kind of research question”, held by researchers (p. 14). The belief on how to understand phenomena held by qualitative researchers is to view them in their context by becoming immersed in them (Atieno, 2009, p. 14). Qualitative researchers believe that each person’s reality is subjective, not a separate reality outside of what we perceive and that we all experience the world from our own point of view (Atieno, 2009, p. 14).

This fierce debate between scientists has lasted for many years (until the 1980s), with researchers believing that the only accurate way to conduct research is through qualitative research methods. A majority of social scientists do not believe that qualitative research can add valuable findings in any specific area and are merely anecdotal stories to be transformed into a hypothesis to be tested (Archer, 2004). Marecek (2003) cited in Tuval-Maschiach

(2016) mentions that post-positive researchers criticize qualitative research because as a method it is anecdotal and lacks systematic specification of its procedures (p. 127).

Nevertheless, over the years, qualitative research has been gaining traction in the social sciences, as researchers have expressed their dissatisfaction with quantitative research as it does not measure the meaning that the individual attaches to events experienced (Tuli, 2010, p. 98), or capture the unique elements of experiences, lives, thoughts and feelings of individuals (Peck & Mummery, 2017, p. 389). This disenchantment led to a movement towards a different way of thinking and understanding phenomena, namely qualitative research (Peck & Mummery, 2017, p. 389). Qualitative methodology allows us to understand social phenomena in a natural setting, and allows the researcher to highlight a person's own experiences, views and meanings, instead of relying on experimental settings (Pope & Mays, 1995, p. 42). Qualitative research uses the participants' own words to understand their experiences within a socially constructed context (Nagata et al., 2017, p. 262). While the aim of quantitative research is to prove a predefined hypothesis or disconfirm theories, qualitative research studies experiences and phenomena by means of examining language (Tuval-Mashiach, 2016, p. 126). Panterotto (2010) as cited in Nagata et al. (2017) believes that qualitative methodology is particularly beneficial for the study of disempowered and marginalized groups (p. 262). Qualitative research allows the researcher, participants, and readers of the study to "embrace the idea of multiple realities" (Creswell, 2008, p. 16).

These ideas led to the development of qualitative methodology, which leads to an increase in understanding of why people act the way they do and how they understand and perceive their world (Tuli, 2010, p. 98). There are purists on both sides of the argument, and consensus has still to be reached regarding the best paradigm to be used in social science research. In the absence of consensus, each researcher decides on a research design that suits the problem and data they are investigating.

The constructivism/interpretivism approach to research is used mostly for qualitative research. Interpretivists believe in the importance of studying human behavior in natural daily life instead of a controlled environment, as they believe that human behavior depends on situations and environmental factors that result in behavior being multi-layered and not determined by scientific models or variables which are easier to control (Dickins, 2004, p. 251).

This debate has highlighted the competing methodologies that are used in social sciences research and have emphasized that they are based on different philosophical assumptions regarding the nature of social reality and the purpose of science and research (Tuli, 2010, p. 103). The philosophical assumptions of the researcher determine the methodological approach to the study (Creswell, 1994, p. 15). These philosophical assumptions consist of the researcher's view on the "nature of reality (ontology), how the researcher knows what they know (epistemology), and the methods used in the process of the research" (Creswell, 1994, p. 16). Researchers in qualitative research study participants in the field, in their natural environment, which provides important contexts for understanding participants' experiences, and the longer the researcher stays in the field and gets to know their participants, the more they will know or understand the participants' experiences (Creswell, p. 18).

I believe that personal experiences cannot be fully quantified by quantitative research, as people's subjective experiences, their reactions to these experiences, and their internalization of these reactions and experiences differ from person to person. For this study, the qualitative research methods fit better with the aims of the research, and using this methodology the current study analyzed the views and experiences among children taking part in a karate program (Theebom et al., 2009, p. 29). To further shape their studies,

qualitative researchers often use interpretive and theoretical frameworks to further their studies (Creswell, 1994, p. 15).

Positivists view the world as a fixed reality, external to people, that can be measured independently (universal laws govern events and can be described, predicted, and controlled by researchers), but the interpretivist or constructivist paradigm views reality as socially constructed, ever-changing, and complex (Tuli, 2010, p. 103; Hudson & Ozanne, 1988 cited in Carson et al., 2001, p. 6)). Interactions with objects and other people constantly shape experiences and reality (Mojtahed et al., 2014, p. 87). Through participating in socially negotiated and discursive activity knowledge and meanings are actively constructed (Mishra, 2015, p. 73). Cohen and Manion (1994) cited in Mojtahed et al. (2014) described that being able to understand different human experiences forms the basis of the constructivist approach (p. 87).

The ontology/epistemology of this study is based on social constructivism. The researcher's view's regarding the nature of reality, the process of how learning what can be known, and the relationship of the researcher to the area being studied are reflected in the theoretical framework for the study (Burr, 2003; Henning, 2005; Terreblanche & Durrheim, 1999). Interviews are the main data collection method used by constructivists as their research focuses on the participant's viewpoints (Mojtahed et al., 2014, p. 87). Inductive research is mainly concerned with generating new theory from data collected and narrows the scope of the study by using research questions and is based on the learning experience. Theory is developed by creating meaning by identifying patterns and relationships. Inductive research does not prevent the researcher from using existing theory but insists that theory must emerge from the research study. To understand human experiences, a mutual and communicative foundation must be identified between research participants and the researcher in the creation of meaning that others have about the world they live in (Mojtahed

et al., 2014, p. 87; Creswell, 1994, p. 21). As researchers “position themselves” in the field, they must acknowledge and keep in mind that their own background, which is based on their personal perspectives and experiences, can influence their interpretation (Creswell, 1994, p. 21). The goal is to understand and depend on how the participants perceive and react to a situation (Creswell, 1994, p. 20).

As it was my purpose to investigate the subjective experiences of children in violent communities, how these children view violence, and whether, after being exposed to a karate program, those views on violence have changed, I chose qualitative research, based on the constructivist / interpretivist approach as a theoretical framework.

According to Charles Cooley’s Looking Glass-Self psychological concept (1902) – “I am not who you think I am; I am not who I think I am; I am who I think you think I am”. This concept states that it is through interpersonal interactions with others, as well as other’s perceptions of us, a person’s sense of self develops. We develop our identity of self through our interactions with others (Jones, 2015, p. 100).

The research problem

Children living in some communities are continually exposed to conflict and violence, which affects their perceptions of violence as a way of solving their problems. These children lack adequate supervision and role models for their behavior, as well as intervention strategies aimed at combatting the negative effects of these perennially unsafe environments they live in. This is a problem because, in these environments, these children learn maladaptive ways of dealing with daily conflicts and issues.

The area I chose for this study is a low socio-economic status area called Kwanonqaba, situated in Mossel Bay. This area was chosen because of the socio-economic statuses of its residents, as well as the increased crime rates in this area, as highlighted in Chapter 2. The traditional Karate school in Kwanonqaba has students from Kwanonqaba, as

well as other poorer areas such as Dalmeida and Asla Park. These areas have very high rates of unemployment, single-parent households, child-headed households, and an increased crime rate.

This study will explore the participant's subjective experiences with regards to violence and how, or if, karate has influenced their behavior in any way.

Purpose of the study

Sieger et al. (2004) suggest that even though neighborhood conditions, as well as an absences of supervision by a guardian, are linked to higher levels of mental stress in children, using more than one kind of intervention may prove beneficial to counteract the negative effects (p. 244). Neglect and violence in communities have become epidemic, leaving children with emotional scars that can cause them to harden and become angry (Twemlow & Sacco, 1998, p. 505), and at risk of developing emotional and behavioral problems (Sieger et al., 2004, p. 245). Many correctional facilities could show improved statistics with added social interventions as conventional methods have not shown to be effective as a sole intervention for youth acting aggressively (Burt and Butler, 2011, p. 48). Twemlow and Sacco, (1998 cited in Burt & Butler, 2011) found that when a residential facility is used as the sole intervention for aggressive behavior in adolescents, recidivism remains high (p.49). Twemlow and Sacco (1998, cited in Burt & Butler, 2011) believe there is a need for a culturally sensitive and affordable program to complement other interventions, and they propose a karate program that integrates clinical components (p. 49). There is a general perception that karate may seem to encourage violence.

Movies and popular culture have portrayed various forms of martial arts, including karate, in ways that have led to a misconception that long-term karate training promotes violence and violent behavior (Martin, 2006, p. 1). Bandura's 1971 Social Learning Theory posits that activities such as karate, which teaches children how to use their fists and legs to

hurt others (kicking and punching) may increase the chances that this type of behaviour will manifest in other areas of the child's life, perhaps impulsively. Bandura et al. (1961) showed in their famous Bobo doll study that aggression is learned through imitation of violent behavior, and therefore is believed that aggressive behavior should increase with Karate training. However, karate is based on the philosophy of the "warrior's pathway", a moral code for improving a fighter's character and personality (Gynarski, 2012, p. 1). Shotokan Karate-Do founder, Gichin Funakoshi (1868–1957) laid down 20 Precepts of Karate which had to be followed and adhered to by all karateka (karate students). These principles include the following:

6. Seek Perfection of Character
(Integrity)
7. Be Faithful
(Loyal)
8. Always Endeavor
(Effort)
9. Respect Others
(Etiquette)
10. Refrain from Violent Behaviour
(Control)

This study investigates karate's potential in reducing violence as a result of instilling these principles into students.

Adding therapeutic principles to the active movement of karate training can be a helpful tool in convincing these children to consider lifestyle changes (Burt & Butler, 2011, p. 49). To be effective, these interventions need to create an environment of trust for the child, while attempting to improve or eliminate negative coping strategies, such as

withdrawal, self-criticism, distraction, aggression, and avoiding responsibility (Dempsey, 2002 cited in Sieger et al., 2004, p. 248). The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the potential effectiveness of karate as an effective intervention strategy. There are existing karate programs for children who are at risk in the area I have identified (as discussed under Research Problem) for my research, and my study will focus on these programs.

Data Collection

The reason for gathering data is to provide evidence of the experience that is being investigated in the form of personal accounts of individuals' experiences (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 138). Purposive selection involves choosing information-rich cases from which the researcher can learn as much as possible (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 140).

The main source of data for this study consisted of 10 boys and girls who live in various communities in the greater Mossel Bay Area. The areas in which these participants reside include Kwa-Nonqaba, Asla, and Dal'meida. These areas are considered by the greater Mossel Bay area, as well as by the police (SAPS) to be violent areas. As indicated in the chart below, violent crime rates are higher in Kwanonqaba than in Mossel Bay.

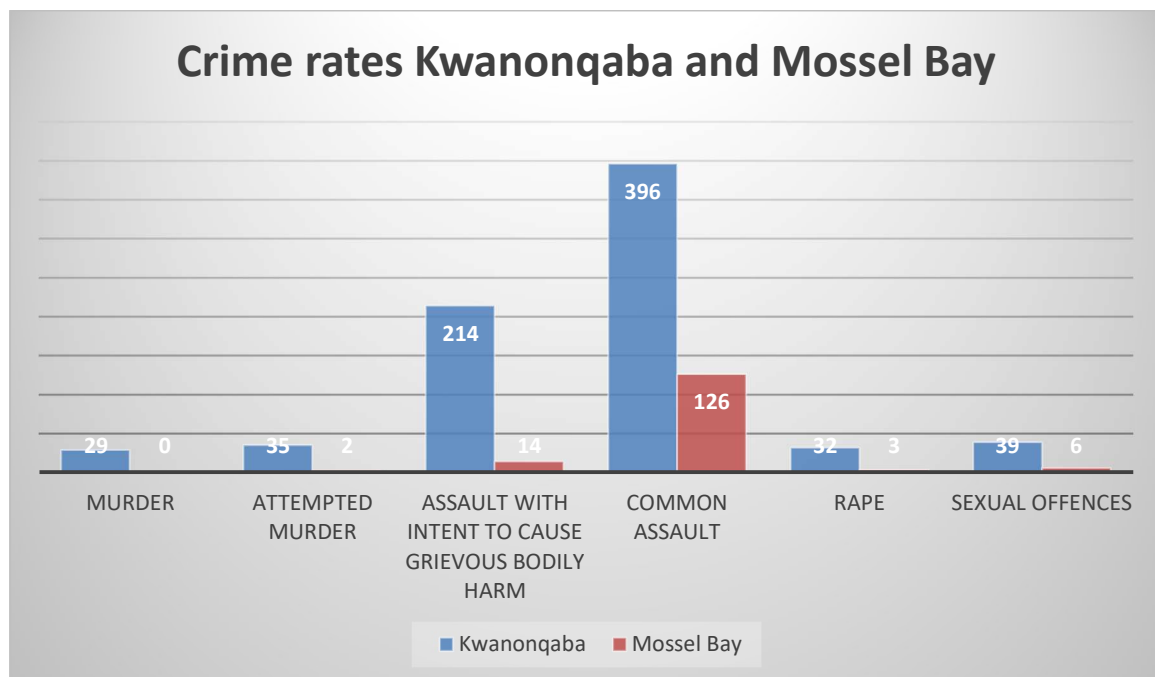


Figure 7. www.saps.gov.za/statistics/crimestats

The participants range in age from 6 years to 14 years old and all are students of a local Traditional Karate Dojo situated in Kwa-Nonqaba.

When conducting research with children, the qualitative researcher faces a myriad of factors that mitigate against taking children seriously, such as cultural, social, psychological, and political perspectives and factors (Darbyshire et al., 2005, p. 419). Until recently, children were considered unreliable, incapable of being taken seriously, and too immature to understand their worlds, as well as lacking the necessary verbal and conceptual abilities to convey their experiences (Kirk, 2006, p. 1251). The criteria for a good research participant include abstract thinking, which comes with the maturity of late adolescence or adulthood, and which children have not yet developed (Darbyshire et al., 2005, p. 419). Due to ethical concerns (Kirk, 2006, p. 1251) and the fact that children are also not seen as individuals independently of their families, households, or schools, adults are often used as proxies to speak on behalf of the children, with research focusing on the perspectives of the adult regarding the child (Darbyshire et al., 2005, p. 419).

Kirk (2006) states that as long as researchers acknowledge that children communicate and participate in research in their own ways, children can be capable of participating in research (p. 1251). The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was formulated to ensure “children are given a voice at all levels of decision making, including in the development and implementation of research” (Taylor, 2000 cited in Mishna et al., 2004, p. 451). Children’s accounts are valid as it they express the children’s perspectives on the world they live in, as that world appears to them, just as with adult participants (Kirk, 2006, p. 1251).

Recent qualitative research is showing that children are not passive bystanders with regards to influences and experiences (Irwin & Johnson, 2005, p. 821) and that as young as 4 years of age, children can provide precise insights into their daily lives (Irwin & Johnson,

2005, p. 822), as children are not mere recipients of influences, but rather actively construct and determine their social lives (Irwin & Johnson, 2005, p. 821).

Ethical Considerations

The study received approval from the Ethics Committee of the College of Human Sciences at Unisa and subsequent approval of the chief instructors at the dojo and parents of the identified participants. Since most of the participants are legal minors, care had to be taken to protect their identities and interests.

During the research process, the protection of a child's rights and interests are paramount, as they are very vulnerable (Ferdousi, 2015, p. 6). Ethics is the method to ensure no harm comes to children participating in the research projects, as well as ensuring their rights are respected. Children are the beneficiaries of several rights entrenched in instruments such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) 1966 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1989 (Koocher & Keith-Spiegel, 2005, p. 3). How the research affects the child's life, their sense of identity and belongingness needs to be considered by the researcher when collecting data and during interpretation and analysis of that data. Rosie Flewitt (2005) argued that it is the researcher's duty to ensure that, through all the stages of research, these ethical principles are applied robustly (p. 554). The researcher must ensure that the rights of the child are fully protected and that the child is participating out of their own volition throughout the entire research process.

Confidentiality

The research participants in the study are referred to by pseudonyms. Confidentiality was explained to each participant in a way that the children understood, as well as the parents/caregivers and the karate instructors.

The term “sensei” is used throughout this study to refer to the karate instructors. This is a general term used in most martial arts and means teacher. In general usage it is used to show respect to a person who has achieved a certain level of mastery in martial arts, namely achieving the level of black belt. The use of the term sensei when referring to the instructors at the dojo does not compromise their confidentiality at all. Most martial arts instructors are called sensei.

None of the responses or any details given to me by the participants were discussed with the instructors or parents or caregivers. I explained to the participants, in a manner they could understand, that any information they gave would not be divulged to anyone other than the supervisor, except if the information raised concern for the safety and well-being of the participant.

Informed consent

According to Sanjari et al (2014) “the principle of informed consent stresses the researcher’s responsibility to completely inform the participants of different aspects of the research” (p. 3). Informed consent provides the participants with the necessary information on the nature of the research for them to make a voluntary, rational, and informed decision on their participation. I prepared an information sheet for the Karate instructors, as well as the parents and caregivers of the prospective participants. The sheet outlined the proposed study and my theoretical approach. This information was given to the instructors and parents/caregivers along with the consent forms. Once consent was obtained from the parents/caregivers, I was introduced to the participants.

I explained the study to the participants in simple clear language, in a manner that they could understand, and I spent time answering any questions the participants had about the prospective study. I explained to the participants that if they did not feel comfortable answering any questions, they would not be obliged to answer, and may leave the study at

any time should they wish to, with no consequences attached. I explained to the participants and their parents/caregivers and the instructors that their identities will be kept secret and that no information that could identify them will be given to anyone. The parents were given consent forms to complete before any research was conducted. Any ethical questions that should arise are recorded, transcribed, translated, and documented so that, throughout the study, the ethical dimension could be monitored.

Sampling techniques

Selecting information-rich cases is the power that drives purposive sampling (Paton, 1990 cited in Coyne, 1997, p. 624). As sampling techniques are not as rigidly prescribed in qualitative research as in quantitative research, some researchers find it confusing (Coyne, 1997, p. 623). The choice of samples is of vital importance to the accuracy of the study. If the incorrect participants are selected from the incorrect communities the study will not produce accurate results. This study focuses on children of a specific age who live in violent communities. For the purposes of this research, I chose children living in Kwanonqaba and surrounding areas.

The method of sampling for this study is purposive sampling. Various factors determine the method of sampling used. The time available to the researcher, the theoretical framework used by the researcher, and any potential restrictions placed on the research by the participant helps determine the method of sampling (Coyne, 1997, p. 624). I had specific requirements that the participants had to meet.

The participants selected for this study came from various township areas in the greater Mossel Bay, namely Kwanonqaba, Asla, and Dalmeida. The reason Mossel Bay was chosen is that it is the town in which I reside. The closest dojo apart from the one chosen for the research is 50km away. The classes are conducted only at night and as I am a woman who had to conduct the research alone, I chose not to travel to the dojo's in the next town due

to safety reasons. The participants were all children ranging from the age of 6 years to 14 years old. I approached a local traditional Karate dojo operating out of Kwanonqaba and spoke to the sensei, who is the head instructor. The dojo is situated in a local community hall in Kwanonqaba and shares the facilities with the Mossel Bay gymnastics club. I introduced myself as a fellow sensei from another dojo in Mossel Bay town and explained the study to the head sensei. The sensei spoke to the children's parents and obtained their permission for the children to participate in the study using a consent form.

As mentioned above, the participants all live in different townships within the greater Mossel Bay, are all English and Afrikaans-speaking, and all attend different schools. Their schools are Garden Route Primary School, Erika Primary School, Milkwood Primary School, and Diaz Primary School. The areas in which these participants live are all high-risk areas, with high levels of violence. Most of the participants, as well as children living in these areas, have parents or caregivers who work a full day and thus have to either catch a taxi or walk alone to and from school, or any other activities they have to attend. These children do not have parents or caregivers at home in the afternoons who can look after them. They spend the majority of their afternoons and holidays either alone at home or on the streets with their friends. These children are exposed daily to violence on the streets as well as in their schools.

Table 1

Participant demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Area they reside in
Johan	6	Kwanonqaba
Jack	6	Kwanonqaba
Jane	7	Asla Park
Sarah	8	Dalmeida
Kobus	8	Asla Park
Pieter	8	Dalmeida
Karen	10	Dalmeida
Jessica	10	Kwanonqaba
Albert	13	Kwanonqaba
Dawid	14	Asla Park

Data collection techniques

Interviews with participants are the most commonly used approach to qualitative data development (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 142), with many different interview styles being recognized by researchers, including semi-structured and focus group interviews (Mojtahed, 2014).

A series of semi-structured interview questions were prepared for the children. I was introduced in advance to the participants and spent a few classes just observing the participants before, during, and after the Karate classes. With my being a sensei in another dojo, teaching a different style, I had a “preconceived” idea of how the class would proceed and how the children would behave. The style I teach is not karate, but Muay Thai and mixed martial arts. These styles are more free and flexible than karate, and my students are

my existing frame of reference. I felt that it was necessary to acknowledge that I was entering this research study with a preconceived idea of how karate classes are run and how the students behave before, during, and after these sessions, and this might not be the same for this particular style being studied.

Participant observation is another form of data collection in qualitative study. Participant observation involves participating while recording what is observed and allows the researcher unique insights into the group or participants being observed (Iacano et al., 2009, p. 39), allowing the researcher to understand the participant's perspective (Takyi, 2015, p. 864). During participant observation the researcher “participates in the daily life of the people under study, observing things that happen, listening to what is said, and questioning people, over a length of time” (Becker & Geer, cited in Baker, 2006, p. 173). One disadvantage is the lack of generalisability as participant observation focuses only on one particular situation (Iacano et al., 2009, p. 40). Immersing oneself with a group of people also can lead to sympathy and identity, which could reduce the researcher’s level of criticism or objectivity (Takyi, 2015, p. 865). A researcher must always remain objective and not get personally involved in the situation in order to collect and analyze data correctly (Takyi, 2015, p. 865).

Not all styles of martial arts teach the same type of values and discipline. In the world of mixed martial arts, there is not as much emphasis on discipline as in karate. I felt that it was necessary first to observe the way the participants engaged with their environment (the dojo), their fellow students, and their sensei. These observations proved to be invaluable as I observed the values and discipline taught in karate in the participants’ behavior, which confirmed part of my research question. I recorded my observations of the participant's behavior before, during, and after the class in a research diary. I observed how the children acted towards each other, the sensei, and other people who were in the community hall at that

time. Over the years of training as well as teaching various forms of martial arts I had learned that students are expected to behave in a certain way. I was aware that discipline and respect were very important in traditional karate, more so than in the current styles that I teach or train in. The more modern forms of martial arts, such as mixed martial arts, do not focus on the traditional values of karate, so the students, especially the younger students, tend to be more undisciplined and lack the respect that you find in traditional karate. I paid close attention to how the participants reacted to this environment and the people in it. Another form of behavior I paid close attention to is the participant's body language. Body language is very important in the study of behavior, as it tells you more about a person than what the person says. I also paid close attention to their non-verbal cues while conducting the interviews. I observed a vast difference between the behavior of the research participants compared to the students in the dojo where I trained. The respect the participants showed their sensei, fellow students, and training space was very clear. The participants were very quiet, greeted each other and the sensei when entering, and went to sit down quietly waiting for the class to start.

My experiences in my dojo are very different – the children do not greet the sensei when they enter, and they run around noisily, disrupting the classes that are in progress. When instructed in class the children in my dojo will openly defy the sensei's instruction and disrupt the class. The research participants eagerly followed instructions and followed the rules with ease. They never complained about having to practice a move more than once. The participants put all their efforts into trying to perfect their techniques, eagerly wanting to please their sensei. They demonstrated a great amount of perseverance, self-discipline, and control. They never complained and eagerly participated.

I conducted three focus group discussions as well as individual interviews over four different days with the participants and observed four different classes. These interviews

ranged in length from 1.5 hours to 2 hours, depending on whether they were focus group discussions or individual interviews. I conducted the interviews in both English and Afrikaans, as these are the home languages of all the students. I am fluent in both languages so there was no need for an interpreter. I told the students that I would not use their names in the research and asked them to choose a pseudonym which they would like me to use. During the interviews, I made notes and recorded my observations of the classes in a diary. I used semi-structured interviews as this gives the participants more opportunity to expand on their responses and open up a bit more. These types of questions also allowed me to probe at the reasons behind their responses. In this study, I spent time with the participants in their environment in order to build rapport with them. When conducting the interviews, I would repeat the answers back to the participants in order to make sure that I had recorded the responses correctly and correct the responses if there were any mistakes to ensure credibility.

However, I soon realized that the participants were reluctant to talk about certain issues. These issues included asking whether the participants felt that violence could be used to solve problems or get what they wanted. This reluctance could be due to the fact that their parents/caregivers and sensei's and I were in the vicinity and that they were afraid to "get into trouble" if they admitted to using violence in any way or thinking that it was acceptable to be violent. They were assured numerous times by their parents and me that this would not be the case, and that their responses would not be discussed with anyone else, but they remained reluctant. The discussions and interviews were conducted in a separate room from where the training takes place. The dojo is situated in a community hall and has a separate office which was offered for the interviews. During these interviews, the only people present were me and the participants.

Being a martial arts instructor (sensei), I have a common language and a common understanding of the issues. This allows special sensitivity, empathy, and understanding of

the matters, but it can also lead to greater prejudice. An outside researcher, on the other hand, will be more distant, less detached, but also less informed. The insider has more knowledge on this particular subject while the outsider has less.

My experience as a martial arts student and instructor could possibly have a negative impact on the research. I have not trained in traditional karate, only in kickboxing, muay thai, and mixed martial arts. My frame of reference is based on my experiences in these forms of martial arts. I have to be careful of my preconceived ideas on the effects of martial arts, and that I do not try to influence the responses to fit my ideas. I need to be constantly aware to be objective and not let my preconceived ideas influence my observations. I do believe however that my experience in martial arts can benefit the research. I understand the principles of the training, as well as the values, taught in the different styles of martial arts.

The first set of questions were about demographics – where the participants live, their school, family structure, etc. I then moved on to questions regarding their daily experiences and observations with violence. Due to the reluctance on the part of some of the participants, as mentioned above, it was difficult to obtain some information from the participants. Some of the participants spoke more freely than others but were still a little reluctant. I then adapted the interviews to focus more on the value system and discipline learned during karate classes and whether these values and discipline were implemented in other areas of the participants' lives. Their responses can shed light on whether it is possible for other forms of interventions, for example, other sports programs, to circumvent the negative effects of violence exposure in children.

For the validity of a research project it is necessary that the researcher disclose his or her biases, beliefs, and assumptions (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127). My beliefs and assumptions are that children learn from what they encounter every day in their environment. I believe that these children who are exposed daily to violence tend to adopt that type of

behavior in their own lives. I believe that these behaviors can be changed by regular programs that teach the children other ways of dealing with day to day situations instead of resorting to violence. Creswell and Miller (2000) state that “this validity procedure uses the lens of the researcher but is clearly positioned within the critical paradigm where individuals reflect on the social, cultural and historical forces that shape their interpretations” (p. 127).

While conducting the research I had to always be aware of my own preconceived ideas on the effects of karate so that my observations were not influenced by these ideas. I had to observe the participants from a more objective perspective as if I had no knowledge of the world of martial arts.

Data Analysis

The idea behind qualitative data analysis is the create meaning from data (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p. 321), as well as the identification and reporting of trends and themes elicited from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6), extracting the evidence that supports an argument. For subjective, systematic interpretation and classification of the data, Hsieh and Shannon (2005) recommend content analysis as the best method (p. 1277).

For this study, I will use the thematic content analysis method of analyzing data.

It is difficult to know in qualitative research where data collection ends and data analysis begins, as one fades into the other (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p. 321). Although analysis rarely proceeds in an orderly manner, Terre Blanche et al. (2006) recommend the following steps (pp. 322 – 327):

- Familiarisation and immersion
- Coding the data
- Searching for themes
- Reviewing the themes
- Defining and naming themes

My observations of the students before, during, and after their classes were written down in a notebook. I took note of how the participants arrived for the classes (the students' affective state, their behavior, talking, making noise, running around, etc); how they behaved while waiting for their class to start (there is a karate class before the participants' class); how they lined up for class; their behavior during class and their interactions with the Sensei while he was giving instructions; and finally, their behavior when class was done and they were dismissed. The interviews with the participants were recorded and comprehensive notes were taken.

I immersed myself in the interview recordings and notes to identify any themes that could possibly present themselves. I had to keep in mind my own knowledge and beliefs developed over the years as an instructor, and make sure this did not bias any of the themes or information gleaned from the notes and interviews and influence the results in any way.

During the extensive review of my notes and recordings, I assigned codes to similar information. This was done to make sorting through the information to identify various themes that may have come up in the interviews. Once the codes are sorted then it is easier to start extracting broader themes and collating the various codes into these themes. I reviewed the data numerous times considering the themes that came up. During analysis the following themes came to light:

- Experiences before joining the karate class
- Attitudes to violence after joining a karate class
- Anxiety and fear
- Respect for self, others, and authority
- Discipline

I reviewed and refined the themes above, reading through all the extracts from the coding phase. I looked out for contradictions or overlapping of the different themes, splitting

some themes into subthemes. I found that self-control and self-discipline were subthemes of theme two, Attitudes to violence after a karate class. I followed this process till I felt that I had all the themes that could represent my data accurately. I then named the themes accordingly, making notes to describe each one.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the final analysis of the data collected during the research process. I will also discuss in more detail the themes that came from the analysis of the data.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

This will discuss in detail the responses to the interviews and observations during the research. I will also discuss the possibility of using karate as an intervention program. The results of the qualitative study conducted and discussed below will attempt to answer the following research questions:

- What are the participant's experiences before joining the karate class?
- What are the participant's attitudes towards violence after participating in a karate program?
- Based on this study, can karate training change preconceived ideas on violence?

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants. Thematic content analysis was used to analyze the data collected from the interviews. The themes that emanated from the interviews are discussed in more detail below. Direct quotes from the interviews were added to illustrate the themes. I will discuss the participants perspectives and experiences in this chapter.

Research Participants

To gather data in line with my research questions, I met with 10 students at a local traditional karate dojo to determine their experiences with violence in their communities, and whether the karate training had changed their outlook and perceptions of violence. The research participants in this study range in age from 6 years old to 14 years old and consisted of both boys and girls. All the participants live in either Kwanonqaba, Dalmeida, or Asla Park, and attend different schools in different areas: Milkwood Primary, Diaz Primary, Ridgeview Primary, Erika Primary, and Imekhaya Primary school. All these communities are part of the poorer neighborhoods in the area and consist mostly of coloured⁶ and black

⁶ The racial classification “coloured” is also referred to as “biracial” or “mixed parentage” in some countries. (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Coloured>).

South Africans. The people living in these areas have a lower socioeconomic status than in the Mossel Bay area. A large majority of the homes are run by a single parent, or by grandparents. In the homes headed by a single parent, the parent generally works at more than one job to keep the family afloat, and the homes headed by grandparents live off state pensions or social grants. In single-parent households, there is generally no additional childcare when the parent or caregiver is at work, so these children must care for themselves after school or in the holidays till their parent or caregiver returns from work. Most of these children walk to and from school unaccompanied by an adult.

These communities fall within the greater area of Mossel Bay and are also more violent than the general Mossel Bay area.

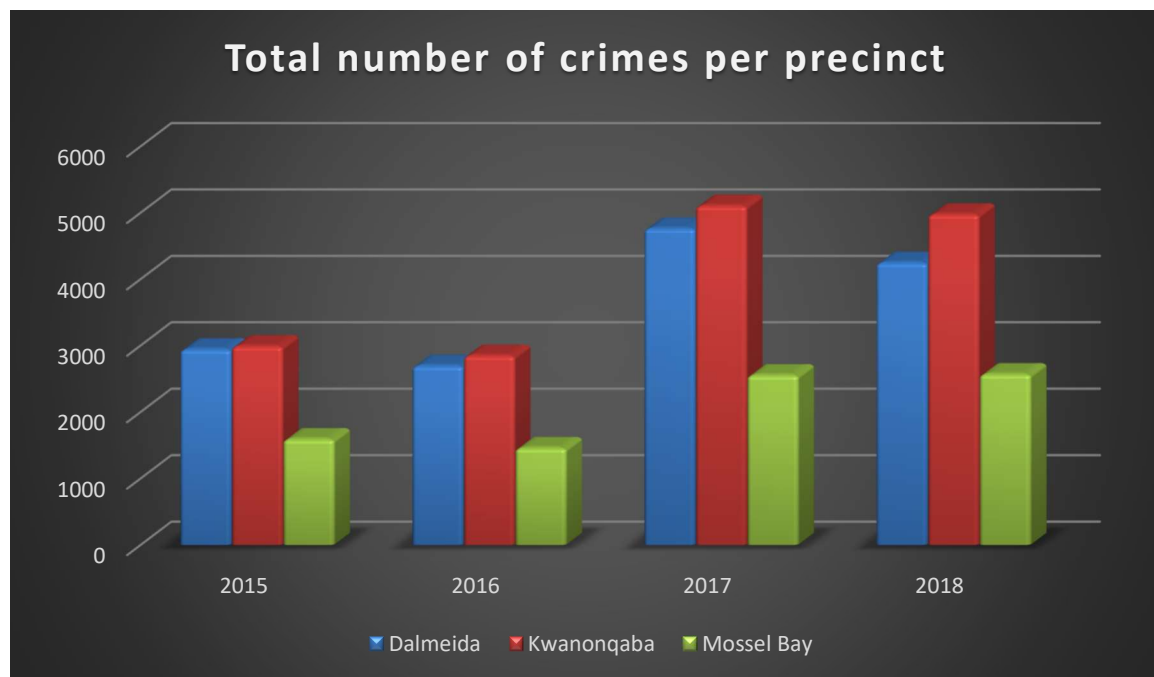


Figure 8

These children live in communities where violence is prevalent, and with the lack of parental or caregiver supervision, these children are frequently left to fend for themselves while the parent or caregiver is at work, due to economic necessity. Exposure to community violence has been identified in numerous studies as a significant developmental risk factor of behavioral and emotional problems in the youth (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008, p. 297).

These behavioral and emotional problems include becoming violent later in life. Buka and colleagues (2001, cited in Aisenberg & Herrenkohl 2008, p. 300) found in a review of various studies that there is a link between early exposure to community of violence early in life and aggressive behaviour and violence, with Margdin and Gardis's (2000) research showing similar findings (p. 300). Savahl et al. (2010, cited in Savahl et al. 2013, p. 11) found that people tend to get desensitized to violence after continual exposure. As discussed in chapter 2, South Africa is ranked as having the fifth-highest number of crimes in the world, leading to children in many communities being exposed to violence in some form daily. When children perceive their neighborhoods as being unsafe, it has been found that they are suspicious of police, have lower perceived self-confidence, and low external locus of control (Savahl et al., 2013, p. 4).

These different contexts all influence the child's behavior. In terms of Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (as discussed in chapter 2) the five interacting systems that influence the child are the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem (Swick & Williams, 2006, p. 371). A child's microsystem, which is the child's direct environment (home, school, church, neighborhood) will affect the child's behavior and interactions between school and home, between home and school, between school and the neighborhood, social interactions in the community, etc, and vice versa. A person does not live in isolation so therefore each system influences the other systems. In this way, if my theory is correct, then the training at the karate class can have a positive effect that will affect various other systems, such as at home, school, and in the community.

On the first evening of the fieldwork, I observed a class. I wanted to get an idea of how the students behaved before, during, and after class, as well as how they behaved towards the sensei and each other. There is another karate class that is held right before the

one I observed, and the students first lined up outside the dojo, all dressed in the required gi (traditional training outfits) with their belts, and then came into the dojo and went to sit down very quietly, showing respect for the class that was in progress. When the class finished the students remained seated, waiting patiently for their sensei to tell them when to come onto the floor. When the sensei called the students, they quietly walked onto the training area and organized themselves into their class positions, according to belt ranking, with the lowest ranking at the back and the highest in front. The students stood quietly in their resting position waiting for class to start. While the class was in session, the students paid attention to the sensei: they did not walk around or talk to each other. The students completed the techniques, then stood quietly waiting for their next instructions. My experience in non-karate dojos has been very different. In non-karate dojos, the students tend to run around making a noise before class starts, are rarely dressed in the required clothes, talk back to the sensei, refuse to participate in certain training activities, and tend to run around making a noise when the sensei is explaining techniques. In my experience, this is due to the fact that, in non-traditional dojos, less focus is given to discipline and other values taught in the more traditional forms of karate. In these dojos, the focus is on the competitiveness of the sport, with little or no emphasis on the Eastern traditional philosophies and values of karate. Most of these students come from communities with high crime rates, abusive families, single-parent households, or households run by elderly grandmothers. Most of these children have little or no support at home, and no parental supervision. Some of them spend the majority of their time on the streets, hanging around with older boys or girls, and learning the way of the streets. The behavior they learn on the streets influences their behavior at home or school. The children who come from violent homes will tend to either imitate the behavior learned at home when at school or in the community or will exhibit other behavioral issues.

Upon analysis of the participants' responses, the main themes that emerged were:

- Experiences before joining the karate class
- Attitudes to violence after the karate class, with the subthemes of self-control and self-confidence
- Anxiety and fear
- Respect for self, others, and authority
- Discipline

The following sections provide a discussion of these themes that emerged from the interviews conducted with the participants.

Theme 1: Experiences before joining the karate class

The most common attitude experienced by the participants before joining the karate classes was that it is acceptable to bully someone or hurt them if they got angry or did not get what they wanted. All the participants have regularly seen others being bullied, been bullied themselves, or bullied others themselves. The participants see this type of behavior in their schools, on the streets, and sometimes at home, on a daily basis. For them, it is a normal part of the day as well as normal behavior. In terms of the social constructivist viewpoint, reality is subjective and influenced by situations, experiences, and perceptions. Social constructivism holds that reality is socially constructed for individuals, groups, and communities (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 129).

A child learns what he/she is taught, so if he/she experiences bullying behaviour at home, this is the behaviour he/she will adopt. When in a different setting such as school or on the streets, they might feel that they can also display this behavior and it is alright to do so. The child might also act out in other ways at school or with their friends. The participants have also all experienced other forms of violence, such as robberies and theft. Some have had their homes burgled and some have seen people on the street being robbed in broad daylight. The majority of these robberies or thefts are committed with some sort of weapon:

most often a knife. I asked the participants if any of them had resorted to some sort of violence in the past, and if so, for what reason, and how they felt about using violence.

Social constructivists try to understand the meaning of the human experience (Mojtahed et al., 2014 p. 87) from the perspective of people who live it on a daily basis (Schwandt, 2000, cited in Ponterotto, 2005, p. 129).

From the responses of the participants, it became clear that a common reaction to anger is lashing out at the person who made them angry. A big risk factor for emotional and behavioral problems in young people is the continual exposure to community violence (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008, p. 297). The participants see this type of behavior in school, on the streets, and at home. Retaliating with violence becomes normalized. It is the only form of conflict resolution they are exposed to. This type of behavior is carried over to different contexts the children may find themselves in. If a child is bullied at school, they may go home and become aggressive or disobedient, or they might withdraw from their family. In terms of the Ecological Systems Theory, no single environment influences a child, all five systems or environments a child is exposed to determines behavior. Through family, home conditions, and exposure to the community, children are socialized into particular behavioral patterns which become a permanent feature in their lifestyle (Walker et al., 1996, p. 196).

“Ja, ek het ‘n girl geslaan. Sy het my kwaad gemaak, toe slaan ek haar.” (Yes, I have hit a girl. She made me angry, so I hit her) – Karen

‘n Pel het iets gedoen wat ek nie gelike het nie, toe slaan ek hom. Ek het gedink hy het dit verdien.” (A friend did something that I did not like so I hit him. I thought he deserved it) – Jack

Karen and Pieter talk about resorting to hitting when they did not like something their friend had done or said. Karen feels that you deal with anger by hitting or lashing out. Pieter

spends his time on the streets, with older boys. The influence of these boys on the streets is great, and what Pieter learns out there affects his behavior at school and home. He has learned that he can just take what he wants, and nobody has a right to stop him. This can lead to severe behavioral issues at school or at home. There is substantial evidence that exposure to violence can have a range of negative effects including low self-esteem, depression, and becoming violent (Savahl et al., 2013, p. 2), as well as aggression and delinquency (Kennedy & Ceballo, 2014, p. 70).

A common belief amongst certain groups of people is that a person has to demand respect by being violent. A common misconception exists that fear constitutes respect. To gain this respect, dominance needs to be asserted, and this is done by violence. Children who grow up witnessing this type of behavior believe these misconceptions.

“Ander mense doen dit, hoekom kan ons nie. Hulle kry respek as hulle ander mense bully.”
(Other people do it, why can't we. They get respect by bullying others) – Albert.

“Jy moet wys wie is baas om respek te kry”

(You must show them who is boss to gain respect) – Dawid

I asked Dawid to clarify what he meant by “jy moet wys wie is baas” (you must show them who is boss). He said that means gaining respect, and the only way to gain respect is to use violence. That is how it is done on the streets. Children learn to rationalize that the use of violence is the best way to solve their problems (Osofsky, 2003, p. 166).

Numerous participants mentioned that the role models in their communities all use this type of behavior. These are the people the participants look up to and whose behavior they model. Many participants mentioned that their primary caregivers work at more than one job and are not available to fetch the children from school or be with them in the afternoons to supervise their activities. These children are left to their own devices and are often found at a loose end on the streets.

Theme 2: Attitudes towards violence after exposure to karate training

Lakes and Hoyt (2004) found that there are huge benefits of martial arts training within the psychosocial domain, including behavioral benefits (p. 285). One of the most pronounced views expressed by the participants is that violence is not to be used outside the dojo unless it is in self-defense. The participants mentioned that the sensei's are very strict with regards to this. As the participants progressed with their training, they came to realize how dangerous it can be to hurt someone else in this way. An important part of their training is that the martial artist must always be in control of themselves. This control is brought on by learning to keep inner calm. Part of their training includes learning how to keep calm when taking strikes themselves. Social interactions are constantly shaping lived experiences (Mojtahed et al., 2014, p. 87). The participants said it is very hard to endure the strikes during the first few months of training. Their first instinct is to retaliate and strike back. A theoretical study by Tadesse (2017) on the positive effects of Asian martial arts found that adolescents training Tae Kwon Do showed markedly lower scores on hostile behavior and verbal aggression (p. 18).

“Dis niks lekker om geslaan te word nie” (it is not nice to be hit) – Kobus

“Ek wou hulle terugslaan” (I wanted to hit them back) – Dawid

“As jy my slaan gaan ek jou slaan. Ek het baie in die moeilikheid gekom by sensei want ek kon myself nie help nie” (If you hit me I will hit you back. I got into trouble a lot with sensei because I couldn't help myself) - Karen

It is not a nice experience being hit, especially in the face. That was one of the hardest lessons I had to learn at the beginning of my training. I am not inclined to hit back but being hit in the face brings out the self-defense instinct to protect yourself and want to hit back. For someone who is used to seeing violence regularly and is inclined to fight, not hitting back takes a lot of restraint. Kobus, Karen, and Dawid mention that it was hard to not

fight back. It was something they had to work very hard on. Physical aspects of combat are combined with strategy, philosophy, and tradition to promote a more thoughtful approach to conflict instead of a purely physical reaction (Green, 2001, cited in Tadesse, 2015, p. 73). This ties in with the subtheme of self-control, which is discussed in more detail below.

Karate students are trained to remain calm and take a breath to evaluate the situation before reacting. The participants mentioned that before training, they just acted without thinking. Now they have learned skills to keep them calm and think before reacting. They are also taught to consider the best possible response to use instead of resorting to violence. These skills have an effect on how the children deal with other situations in the various contexts of their daily lives. If they are at school and they get into a conflict situation with another child or even a staff member, where the child would just have reacted before, their karate training will kick in. They will first take a second, breathe and evaluate the situation before reacting. This pause gives them time to think about their reactions and what would be the best way to deal with the situation. This will mostly lead to different reactions than they would have had in the past. These new skills they have learned will bleed over into all aspects and environments of their daily lives. They will find more positive ways to deal with conflict. These participants have been exposed to a different type of social interaction which has changed their perceptions of reality in a more positive way.

When asked whether the participants had committed any acts of violence since starting the karate program, and if so, how they felt after committing the act, some of the participants admitted to wanting to resort to violence in order to take out their frustration on others.

“My vriend het my kwaad gemaak en ek wou hom seer maak, maar dit is nie die regte ding om te doen nie. Ek het weggeloop.” (My friend made me angry and I wanted to hurt him, but that is not the right thing to do, so I walked away) – Sarah.

“Dit is nie maklik om weg te loop nie, ek wil nog slaan. Maar ek weet die sensei en my ma sal kwaad wees vir my. Ek wil hulle nie kwaad maak nie” (it is not easy to walk away I still want to hit. But I know my sensei and my mom will be cross with me. I don’t want to make them cross) – Kobus

“Ek sukkel nog bietjie om nie terug te slaan nie.” (I still struggle not to hit back) – Dawid

Some of the participants did mention that they still struggle with not lashing out. These are behaviors that most of them have exhibited most of their lives and these behaviors are not easy to change. One of the participants in particular struggled more than some of the others. She was a little reluctant to talk at first, as she felt embarrassed about her behavior. I assured her that what was said would remain confidential and that I am not there to judge her behavior in any way, I am only interested in gathering information. She relaxed a little and admitted that she had resorted once to hitting a friend. She showed and expressed deep remorse for her actions and told me that she actually felt horrible afterward. She said that she will not do that again, she felt too bad.

“Ek het haar geslaan. Maar toe voel ek baie sleg na die tyd. Dit is nie reg om ander mense seer te maak nie.” (I hit her. But then afterwards I felt bad. It is not right to hurt other people) – Jane

“Dit is nie reg om ander mense seer te maak nie.” (Hurting others is not the right thing to do) – Johan.

“Die karate is net vir self verdediging, nie om ander seer te maak nie.” (Karate is only for self-defence, not to hurt others) – Jack

Before embarking on their journey as martial artists, these participants often did not think that using violence was wrong. Since starting training, their views on violence changed. They no longer consider violence as a strategy to be used lightly, but only when it is the only way to defend themselves from an attack. When I asked them if they enjoy hitting or bullying, they were all very adamant that they did not like such behavior anymore. In his study on juvenile delinquents, Trulson (1986) found that after participating in a Tae Kwon Do program for 6 months, the participants showed a marked decrease in their scores on aggression (p. 1135).

While analyzing the data two subthemes emerged, namely self-control and self-confidence. I will discuss these two subthemes below.

Self-control. Self-control was mentioned in depth by many of the participants. Before embarking on karate training the participants would act without thinking, especially when it came to retaliation for a perceived or real slight against the participant. When provoked, or if something was done that the participant did not like, they tended to react without thinking. After being part of the training program for some time, the participants found that they would hesitate before reacting. One of the main aims of karate is not violence, but self-control. As a student, you are taught to first take a breath and think before reacting. This helps the student to re-evaluate the situation and reconsider their reactions. The participants talk about struggling a little with this concept in the beginning. They were learning how to fight and could now really “teach another person a lesson” (Kobus): however, the more they spent time training, the more they came to realize that violence might not be the only option. The participants said they began to become less inclined to use some sort of violent retaliation. If a child learns self-control strategies while learning karate, they show improved flexibility and adaptability, leading to more effective management of

aggressive motivation when provoked, thus engaging less in aggressive behavior in the future (Hernandez & Anderson, 2015, p. 169).

“As ek baie kwaad raak, wil ek soms nog die person slaan wat my kwaad gemaak het. Maar ek weet nou dit is nie reg nie, ek weet ek moet eerder wegloop. Dit is nie altyd maklik nie, maar ek moet prober.” (Sometimes when I get very angry, I still want to hit the person who made me angry. I know now that I cannot do that, I know I must rather walk away. It is not always easy to do, but I must try) – Karen.

The participants did mention that they still sometimes wanted to hurt someone else, but they found themselves hesitating. They mention that they were not so keen to use violence anymore. For them, it had become the last resort instead of a first reaction. Studies found an improvement in cognitive self-regulation in children who are training in traditional martial arts, as well as improved conduct in the classroom, with boys showing greater improvement than girls (Lakes & Hoyt, 2004, p. 4).

“Jy moet doen soos my ma gesê het, turn the other cheek.” (You must do what my mother used to say, turn the other cheek) – Sarah

Sarah says her mother always talks about turning the other cheek, but she says it is not all that easy. The other participants echo her thoughts, saying that it is not easy to do nothing when someone is acting aggressively towards them. It took them a long time to fully understand the importance of “turning the other cheek”. The two youngest participants still struggle a little with this concept.

“As ek kwaad raak, dan moet ek eers bietjie dink voor ek enige iets doen daaroor.” (When I get angry, I must first think a little before I do anything) – Pieter.

“Ek moet mooi besluit hoe ek gaan reageer.” (I must first decide carefully how I am going to react) – Albert.

“Ons kan nie net terug slaan of op iemand skreeu nie, al wil ons. Ons moet eers probeer wegloop.” (We cannot just hit or shout at someone, even though we want to. We must first try to walk away) – Jessica.

Self-regulation is the ability to regulate and alter one's actions and feelings in a certain situation. The more the participants learn self-control the more they learn to regulate their behavior. After being exposed to regular training over a period of time they are able to control their actions, reactions, and emotions in most situations. This has led to them making better decisions regarding their behavior. A link has been found in research between martial arts and self-regulation, which is a highly adaptive trait that helps individuals bypass and override their responses, including assisting themselves in changing behavior (Baumeister et al., 2006, p. 1773). These changes in behavior are not just during class but in all aspects of their lives.

“Loop net weg, jy kan nie doen wat hulle doen nie.” (Just walk away, you can't do what they do) – Kobus.

This may be a sign of fear or anxiety more than not wanting to retaliate. The participants talked a lot about being scared to walk down the street. They were scared to walk to and from school, and some even talked about being afraid to be at school. These feelings of fear and anxiety were more prevalent in the participants before they began any form of karate training. Anxiety and fear were recognized as a theme during data analysis and will be discussed in more detail later.

Self-confidence. Confidence is developed in karate by learning the self-defense moves and techniques. Martial artists become more self-reliant and confident in making independent decisions in their everyday lives, not only in the dojo. Improved self-confidence leads to less anxiety in the participants. Some of the participants mentioned that they were less afraid to walk to and from school, and felt more confident at school, as they knew that if

anything should happen to them, they could defend themselves. Lakes and Hoyt (2004) found an increase in self-esteem, more effective methods of dealing with physical challenges, and self-confidence (p. 285).

“Ek was nie meer so bang nie. Ek het nie omgee om huis toe te stap na skool nie.” (I was not so afraid anymore. I did not mind walking home after school anymore) – Johan.

The participants all spoke of how much their confidence had grown since starting the training. Women participating in Seiko karate in the United States reported improvements in their self-esteem after training, as well as changes in physical self-perception (Guthrie, 1997, p. 1). Adolescents participating in a Tae Kwon Do program showed significantly higher scores on self-acceptance and personal growth (Tadesse, 2017, p. 19).

“Voorheen het ek altyd gestap met my kop af en vir niemand gekyk nie. Ek was te bang hulle sien my raak. Nou stap ek en kyk vir die mense. Ek is nie meer altyd so bang nie.” (Before I used to walk with my head down and not look at anyone. I was too scared they would notice me. Now I look at people when I walk. I am not so scared all the time anymore) – Sarah.

The participants report that they still do get scared at times to walk around in the streets, especially the girls, but this is no longer an everyday, pervasive feeling. They spoke with pride of how they are now able to move around a little more freely without anxiety and fear. They are still careful as to where and when they take to the streets but feel that if the need should arise, they can defend themselves.

“Hulle (bullies) maak my nie meer bang nie” (They [bullies] do not make me afraid anymore) – Jack.

“Ek hoef nie meer bang te wees vir hulle nie, hulle kan my nie meer seer maak nie” (I do not need to be afraid of them anymore, they cannot hurt me anymore) – Dawid.

A number of the participants spoke about how they are more able to stand up to bullies at school or to walk away from confrontation. The self-control strategies a child learns while training karate helps them become more adaptable and develop more effective management of aggressive responses when provoked: they are less inclined to engage in aggressive behavior (Hernandez & Anderson, 2015, p. 169).

They also mentioned that they find themselves more inclined to defend someone else who is being bullied. They have the confidence to stand up to bullies more regularly than before.

In the communities in which these participants live, there is a common misguided belief that if you do not retaliate or strike back when offended, a person is considered weak. The youth do not want to be known as weak as this makes them easy targets for bullies and criminals. So, they succumb to peer pressure and will retaliate to prevent themselves from appearing weak. The participants talked about how they do not care anymore if they are thought of as weak, as they know they are not. They have enough self-confidence to be able not to partake in violent behavior to prove they are worthy. They know they are.

When one values oneself and has good self-esteem, one feels secure and worthwhile. Generally, such a person has good relationships with others and feels secure about their skills. They are also open to learning and feedback, which will help them develop and master new abilities. Self-esteem is a person's perceptions about their value and worth, and also encompasses a person's feelings about their worthiness or unworthiness. The reason self-esteem is so important is it serves as a motivational function, influencing the choices and decisions a person makes. Self-esteem is a huge motivator in whether people explore their full potential or not, aspiring to reach their goals and aspirations. When facing adversity, people with lower self-esteem do not intend to consider themselves worthy or deserving of happiness or of achieving any of their goals, thus they tend to be less resilient, persistent and

loose motivation. Low self-esteem leads to lower motivation in people, and even though they have the same goals as people with high self-esteem, they generally do not pursue these goals due to lack of motivation.

Self-esteem is a rather abstract concept and potentially difficult to comprehend for those who do not have it. To start developing self-esteem a person must start learning to value and love themselves, for when children value and believe in themselves, they take extra care of themselves, making better decisions to enhance their value rather than breaking it down. Part of the system in karate is being valued by the sensei and fellow students. This in turn gives the child the confidence needed to navigate the world.

Theme 3: Anxiety and Fear

Children who are exposed to community violence regularly live in constant fear. No environment is safe for them. When regularly exposed to violence, a child's sense of safety, self, and a general feeling of well-being is compromised (Savahl et al., 2013, p. 4). Fear, stress, PTSD, lowered self-esteem and depression are some of the consequences of exposure to violence (Ngqela & Lewis, 2012, p. 89). This fear and anxiety affects other areas in a child's life. They may become withdrawn from caregivers or at school, or they may act out in other ways. Barroso et al. (2008) found that an effect of exposure to violence on children is feelings of feelings of hopelessness and helplessness (p. 143).

The vast majority of children in the communities selected for the study have to walk or take taxis to and from school on their own, and never know what might happen on their daily travels. I asked the participants how they feel walking around their neighborhoods.

"Dit is 'n bietjie scary om partykeer huis toe te loop na skool." (It is sometimes a little scary to walk home after school) – Jack

All of the participants expressed fear of either the journey to and from school or just walking down the road. These participants do not have a choice of how they get to school, since their

parents or primary caregivers do not own cars. The participants have no choice but to walk or take a taxi (if there is any spare money to pay for the taxi). Studies found that one of the consequences of interpersonal trauma in childhood are psychiatric syndromes such as mood and anxiety disorders (Voisin et al., 2010, p. 2; McCart et al., 2007, p 434).

Being exposed to violence or the threat of violence in any form on a daily basis can cause a prolonged stress response which negatively affects the child's development and learning outcomes.

"As iemand jou goed wil he, dan vat hulle dit net. Hulle sal jou slaan of steek as jy dit nie gee nie." (Your stuff will be taken from you if someone wants it. They will hit you or stab you if you do not give it) – Jessica.

"Hulle sal jou doodmaak vir 'n R10" (They will kill you for R10) – Jane.

"Ek was altyd bang" (I was always afraid) – Jack

"As jy verby die skollies stap, dan dreig hulle vir jou en lag vir jou" (When you walk past the criminals, they threaten you and laugh at you) - Sarah

These participants face challenges of potential violence on a daily basis. They live in constant fear that they might fall victim to a random act of violence. There is always someone hanging around on the streets trying to rob them or worse. These children do not have any choice in being on the streets sometimes, as they have no other form of transport. This puts them at risk of becoming victims. Jane is particularly scared of walking in the street alone. She is young and lives in a high crime community. She has seen violence committed against other people in the streets.

As discussed above under the themes of self-control and self-confidence, after regular karate training, this fear and anxiety became less. The participants talked about how they were no longer so afraid to be in the streets and to travel to school or wherever they needed to

be. They became more confident of their abilities to defend themselves, or others, if needed, and therefore felt much less afraid to be in the community.

Theme 4: Respect for self, others, and authority

Traditional martial arts also aim to develop a respectful attitude (Zivin et al., 2001, p. 456). During karate training, there is constant interaction between the student and the teacher. This interaction leads to mutual respect between the teachers, students, and other students in the dojo. This respect between trainer and student leads to an important connection and bond. Children also learn to respect other students: those who are more advanced as well as those who are ranked below them. Children learn to respect the space they train in and their teachers for the skills and experience they share with them. They also learn that their trainers respect them for their willingness to spend the time to master their skills. Twemlow et al. (2008) believe that “the ultimate aim of the art of karate lies not in victory or defeat, but in the perfection of the character of its participants” (p. 2).

“Die skollies wil respek hê, maar hulle maak jou seer om dit te kry” (Criminals want to be respected, they hurt you to get that respect) – Karen.

“Ons het almal gedink dis hoe jy respek kry” (We all thought that is how you gained respect) – Dawid

“Ons was baie verkeerd” (We were very wrong) - Albert

In the communities where the participants live, there is a misconception that respect is earned by being violent or showing dominance. However, the participants have learned that respect is earned and given in a very different way. Part of the value system of karate is the mutual respect between teacher, student, and other students as well as respect for oneself. Once the students have mastered this skill, they start respecting their teachers, caregivers, and authority figures in the community more. All forms of traditional martial arts share the same basic principle, which is the respect accorded to “seniors (parents, instructors, higher ranking

students, teachers) as well as respect for peers, consideration for the weak, fellow students, perseverance and integrity” (Martin, 2006, p. 6).

“Die senseis het ons geleer jy moet respek verdien. Jy moet ander mense reg behandel en respekteer, dan sal jy respek kry” (The sensei’s taught us that you must earn respect. You have to treat others properly and respect them, then you will be respected) – Pieter
“Jy kan nie respek demand nie” (You cannot demand respect) – Jack

The participants recognize that using violence against others does not gain respect: it merely promotes fear. They started to understand that the fear and anxiety some of them felt as a result of exposure to violence, is how others feel if they resort to violence. They began to understand how the other person might feel. This has influenced how they react when confronted. One of the aims of karate is to develop a respectful attitude (Zivin et al., 2001, p. 456). The participants learned to respect their training space, their instructors, their fellow students, and very importantly, to respect themselves.

A ranking system exists in all forms of karate. This system differentiates the experience and skill of the different students. Karate students are taught to respect all students, regardless of rank. Each student is respected for the journey they have embarked on and the ranking they have achieved so far, whether they have been training for years or have just started. Karate is open to all people regardless of height, weight, gender, or age: and everyone is accepted. It teaches students to accept and respect everyone, regardless of their differences.

Respecting others is a sign of humility, which is an important value in karate. In karate, failure is as important as winning or succeeding. Through failure, a student learns some of their greatest lessons, including humility. A student is taught that there will always be someone better than they are, but all that is required to succeed in karate is doing the best the student can and working hard. The student is required to adopt an attitude of humility and

respect for their opponent. These lessons will apply across all areas of the student's life.

They learn that in life there are times when things will not go the way you planned or the way you want, and that is life. You just have to accept this fact and move on with your life.

Theme 5: Discipline

“Ons moet hard werk” (We must work hard) – Johan.

“Jy kry niks vir free nie.” (You get nothing for free) – Jane.

“Die training is nie maklik nie. Ons moet baie hard werk.” (The training is hard. We have to work hard) – Jessica.

“Ons kan nie iemand anders se goed vat nie, jy moet werk vir wat jy wil hê.” (We cannot take someone else's stuff, you must work for what you want) – Kobus.

The participants talk about how hard the training is. They laugh as they talk about how they sometimes wanted to collapse on the dojo floor from exhaustion. They all agreed though that the hard work makes it all so much more rewarding. They have learned that nothing is free. A person cannot take something that is not theirs simply because they want it. Everything in life must be worked for. The harder a person works for something, the more it is appreciated. The participants talked about the feeling when they passed their first grading and all subsequent gradings. They all agreed that it was the most rewarding thing they have all experienced. All that hard work had paid off and they had progressed up in the rankings. Some said that it was so rewarding because they had done it themselves and worked very hard. This has directly affected their schoolwork too. The children now realize that they can achieve something if they work harder at school. Dawid spoke about how he has realized that he can't just get a matric certificate or degree, he has to work hard for it. And the harder he works, the bigger the opportunities might be.

When a student joins a karate class, there is an expectation that the student will strictly adhere to the rules and regulations set around the classes. This includes strict

adherence to the time the class starts and ends, as well as being in class on a regular basis. When they attend classes, they are expected to pause their life outside the dojo and place full focus on learning their techniques. This requires tremendous discipline from the students. They are expected to arrive before the class starts and greet the sensei by bowing before beginning the class. This is considered an official greeting and sign of respect by the different cultures that have influenced karate. This teaches the student to be disciplined and respectful towards their teachers and seniors. By respecting the instructors and seniors the students build trust and a strong bond with them. This bond will last a lifetime.

Discussion

The themes that emerged during this study fit in with some of the rules and values of the Dojo Kun that the participants need to learn during training. I did not deliberately design the questions to elicit answers that refer to the principles of the Dojo Kun. However, I have trained in various forms of karate for 18 years, have been an instructor for 3 years, and am aware of the positive values and effects that karate training develops in a person as she has seen this first-hand over the years.

The first rule or value is to seek perfection of character, which is the ultimate goal of karate. All the themes that emerged from this study namely refraining from violence, respect for others, self-confidence, self-control, self-discipline, and self-regulation are all characteristics of the perfection of character.

In terms of Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1917-2005) Ecological Systems Theory, the child and the environment he lives in influences growth and development. The world of the child consists of five interacting systems which all influence each other (Swick & Williams, 2006, p. 371). All relationships between people in the child's world and the child are bidirectional, with each person's actions and reactions affecting the other. Situations in the child's immediate environment, as well as broader environment all, affect how the child will behave.

Thus, all that is learned during the karate training will influence how the child behaves in other contexts. The child will now have a different frame of reference to help navigate their world. If this influence is positive then it will have a positive influence on how the child will behave at home, school, in the community.

Karate as an intervention strategy

The aim of karate is not violence, but self-control. This research study is far from being exhaustive, and more research is needed in this area. However, this study does indicate, albeit, on a small scale, that karate programs can change preconceived ideas about violence.

Karate is often confused with competitive fighting skills, which have become popular in local dojos and are glorified by popular culture (Martin, 2006, p. 1). Karate has proven to be a very effective way of teaching children certain values, including consequences of actions, respect for others, and self and responsibility (Martin, 2006, p. 2). According to Zivin et al. (2001) as cited in Martin (2006), the aim of karate, in addition to self-defense, “is to develop a centered, calm, discriminating mind that is subsequently applied in all areas of life; the antithesis of a mindset for aggression, whether impulsive or not” (p. 2). This is in line with the first rule of the Dojo Kun, namely, to seek perfection of character. Seeking perfection of character is the ultimate goal of karate. Seeking perfection of character is taught through rigorous training and discipline and is not just the physical aspect of training. The aim of the training is that the spirit to fight, which is not just physical fighting, is brought out through confidence and technique. The spirit to fight is the courage to attempt to successfully navigate any challenges in life, including personal issues, sickness, economic or business issues and any problems arising at home. The research has shown that these values and ethics transfer into the personal lives of the students. In confirming this, the participants spoke about gaining more confidence and that they did not need to fight to get their way.

Asian karate traditionally emphasizes self-knowledge, self-improvement, and self-control, which is in stark contrast to Western sports (Binder, 2007). The participants are taught in the training to constantly want to improve their skills, and to work hard to improve themselves. They are taught and encouraged to do what is necessary to achieve the mastery of their art, as well as their goals. This is in line with rule 3 of the dojo kun: “Always Endeavor”. Mastery of anything is not possible without effort and sacrifice by the student. Part of this rule is always to be sincere and not to be superficial, and that genuine effort put in by the student will be recognized by the sensei. In turn, the students are taught that applying serious effort in all they do will bring about rewards. If they work hard at school, they will get the marks they need to go to university, or if they work hard at their job they will get rewarded with a stable job and possible increases in salary and possible promotions. People who live in poor communities grow up believing they have no prospects, and this belief leads to depression, hopelessness, aggression, and a general attitude of “why should I try?”

Developing a well-balanced mind and body through training fighting techniques is the main purpose of karate. Budo and traditional karate share as their main aim the cultivation of the human characteristics that value peace over violence, preferring to stop a fight before it occurs (International Karate Federation). This is in line with the 5th rule of the Dojo Kun: “Refrain from violent behavior”. The research participants are taught during each class that their training is not to learn to go out onto the streets and fight. Their training is to teach them control of their aggression and control of their feelings. The student must only use his/her training to defend him/herself. A student with a strong character will always be in control of his/her emotions and walk away from fights. They feel they do not need to prove their abilities and skills by fighting, walking away from the physical fight is a win for students. Many western societies find it difficult to understand this concept as westerners are so competitive that they only want to win tournaments as quickly as possible. This is against

the Dojo Kun, and the participants and all karate students need to be constantly reminded of this. The participants are reminded of this at every training.

Karate also aims to develop a respectful attitude (Zivin et al., 2001, p. 456), as well as providing an instructor who is an exemplar of restraint, exhibits model behavior, and is a role model and mentor upon which the students can model their behavior on. The 4th rule of the Dojo Kun is to respect others. Respect for others is one of the most important aspects of Japanese and Okinawan culture, which is why it is common in karate. Gichin Funakoshi believed that there is no dojo without courtesy and that karate begins and ends with etiquette. A very important aspect of training is to show respect everywhere you go and in everything that you do. This aspect is just as important outside the dojo as it is inside, and respect is extended to all, including the sensei's, teachers, parents, school, the law, etc. This part of the training is very important in helping youth who are at risk of becoming violent to develop a different "attitude" to the community and the people in that community. By learning to respect others, themselves, and all aspects of their communities, the student will also learn to reconsider their options regarding violence as a means to an end. This aspect will also help them in their family lives, schoolwork, and how they approach employment, as well as how their behavior might influence and affect their direct environment.

By learning to respect others, by developing self-control, self-discipline, self-confidence, and hard work, the student learns that they do not need to prove anything to another person or themselves. Boys do not need to hurt others to prove themselves: they prove themselves in other ways, for example working hard, always endeavoring, and a respect for themselves and others. However, through regular karate training, using violence to gain respect is no longer a viable option. This "street code" or idea of proving oneself becomes unsustainable and is at odds with the strict code that is taught during karate training.

The only tape measure that will be used is to measure yourself today against the person you were yesterday and to determine whether you have become a better person.

All these non-physical aspects of karate training help the student develop a better sense of well-being, with more effective coping strategies with which to navigate the communities they live in. The students become more resilient. Masten (2014) broadly defines resilience as “the capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten system function, viability or development” (p. 6). While researching resilience in the field of violence, protective factors that mitigate negative functioning include education, emotional intelligence, self-esteem, hope, and optimism (Sabina & Banyard, 2015, p. 338), with club involvement and social support being a secondary protective factor (Sabina & Banyard, 2015, p. 338). The dojo also forms an environment of trust, which encourages the development of healthy coping strategies and attempts to eliminate negative strategies like withdrawal, self-criticism, distraction, aggression, and avoiding responsibility (Dempsey, 2002 cited in Sieger et al., 2004, p. 248).

All these aspects allow the student to adapt better to transitional changes from childhood to adolescence to adulthood, which is of paramount importance (Tadesse, 2015, p. 180). Successfully navigating these changes, as well as the minefield that is their home communities, allows these students to make better life choices and in turn enjoy better outcomes later in life.

In the last chapter, I will summarise my findings from the research project. I will also discuss my recommendations based on the findings.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In this chapter, I will summarise my findings from the research project. I will also discuss my recommendations based on the findings.

Karate, such as karate, has been shown to reduce violence in students. Children living in violent communities suffer trauma in various forms daily and tend to adopt maladaptive coping methods. These maladaptive methods include substance abuse, truancy, and resorting to violence to “get their way”. This trauma can lead to severe consequences for the children, including negative behavioral, cognitive, and neurodevelopmental outcomes, as well as a variety of psychiatric syndromes such as mood and anxiety disorders, depression, Generalised Anxiety Disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, increased aggression, feelings of hopelessness, suicidality and personality disorders. These children also experience several academic problems. To compound the issue, these children do not always have adequate supervision when not in school. Most of them have parents or caregivers who have to work long hours, and some do not have any form of caregiver.

Within this context, this study’s primary research objective was to evaluate whether Karate programs can be used as part of an intervention program to help mitigate the negative effects of regular exposure to community violence.

This chapter provides a summary of the key findings of the study conducted and the potential contribution of karate training to negating the negative effects of community violence on children. I have used a qualitative research design and have gathered all the data using focus groups and interviews. This is followed by any limitations the which I believe may exist.

Key Research Findings

To define and understand community violence and how it affects children who are exposed daily, I started by examining the literature. This examination revealed that there are

many forms of violence that are considered community violence, and the pervasive negative effects of said violence.

The literature shows that South African crime rates are higher in some communities than others and that a large majority of children in these communities have been exposed to some sort of violent crime (Foster & Brooks-Gunn, 2015, p. 293). The violence that preceded the end of Apartheid changed communities, introduced violence as a way of achieving goals, and created societies characterized by violence (Savahl et al., 2013, p. 1). Even though political violence has decreased since 1994, other forms of violence, especially theft, hijacking, and housebreaking have prevailed.

One of the most prominent findings of this study is the effects of constant exposure to community violence on children. These effects are pervasive with potential negative psychosocial outcomes (Savahl et al., 2013, p. 2), emotional and behavioral problems (Sieger et al., 2004, p. 245), cognitive impairment and developmental problems (Sieger et al., 2004, p. 246), depression, trauma-related symptoms and low self-esteem (Rosewater, 2003, p.6). These effects can be devastating, and the negative effects can carry on into adulthood. Effective intervention strategies are of vital importance to negate these negative effects in children in order to provide them with better future outcomes.

The literature is not extensive with regards to karate programs being used as intervention strategies. However, the literature that does exist supports the positive effects of such programs. The values taught through karate training include self-control, self-discipline, respect for self and others, honesty, kindness, and honor. These values flow over into the student's everyday lives and their interactions with their peers and families. The instructors provide good role-models for the students. The students will then imitate the patterns of behavior that they see in their teachers.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is the Ecological Systems Theory, developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner. This framework proposes that there are five systems in a child's world, each one affecting the other. What happens in a child's home, school or community can affect many aspects of their world. When dealing with behavior, one cannot look at one aspect of the child's environment in isolation, you need to investigate all aspects and the influence it has.

The ontology and epistemology for this study is the social constructionist / interpretivist approach. Social constructivism assumes that meaning ascribed to an object or event is constructed through social interaction with others (www.encyclopedia.com). Social constructionists believe that learning is dependent on social situations in response to their environment. For example, Vygotsky believed in the importance of language and culture in cognitive development. Children who grow up in violent societies are subject to various forms of abuse and violence daily, leading them to be more likely to adopt a violent lifestyle. The main focus of the study was the way in which the participants perceive their reality within their social context in terms of social constructivism theory. The use of social constructivism means that as tendencies to violence are socially constructed, so too are the remedies of the problem.

Attitudes towards violence

The study showed a change in the perceptions of violence before and after exposure to a karate program. Before joining the karate program, the participants tended to think the use of violence was acceptable. After exposure to this program, the participants changed their perception and attitude towards violence. They no longer believed violence was acceptable unless it was for self-defense. These students developed self-confidence, learned self-control, self-discipline, and respect for self, others, and authority. The student also mentioned a

reduction in fear and anxiety. By learning self-control, discipline, and developing self-confidence, the students are able to regulate their behavior. They are able to control and change their behavior and emotions in any given situation, which in turn leads to better decision-making, which is of particular value when the student is confronted by a violent situation or the threat of violence.

Karate as an intervention strategy

Despite popular belief, karate does not promote violence but has proven effective in teaching students desirable values. These values help the student develop a sense of well-being, become more resilient, and develop more effective coping strategies, which can help them navigate the communities they live in. The training aids in eliminating negative strategies such as withdrawal, self-criticism, aggression, and avoiding responsibility. These qualities help the student adapt more effectively with changes from childhood to adulthood, as well as any challenges that occur during these transitions, allowing them to make better life choices.

Limitations of this study

This study was by no means exhaustive. I only have access to about 10 students from these communities. My time was also very limited based on when the participants and the sensei were at the dojo. Monetary constraints also prohibited me from traveling to different communities in neighboring towns to conduct more interviews. Due to time constraints the I only had a limited time in which to conduct the interviews. While the results lean towards confirming my theory, more in-depth studies need to be conducted in this area. As with all theories, the more research that can be done the better the information that can be used when developing appropriate intervention programs.

Recommendations

For future research I believe that the study should be conducted over longer periods of time, spanning from when the participants are young to when they reach adulthood in order to determine how the training affected them in the long term. As this was a very limited study, the participants had only been part of the program for a very short time. Programs such as this should be used in conjunction with other social programs.

Conclusion

Community violence poses a significant risk to the well-being of the youth of South Africa. There are many different causes and faces of this violence. The effects can be seen in the victims for many years after exposure and negatively affect their future prospects. More programs that teach positive values and behavior, such as karate training, are needed to target the youth to combat these negative effects as early as possible, and not only when it is too late.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form for participants in this research study on changing perceptions on violence through a karate Program.

Dear Sir / Madam,

I am a Masters (Psychology) student at the University of South Africa (Unisa) and am undertaking a research project entitled “An exploration of karate training on young children in Kwanonqaba, Mossel Bay”. This project will be under the supervision of Professor Deidre Byrne, Department of Gender Studies, Unisa, and will be conducted in Mossel Bay.

This Informed Consent Form has two parts:

- Information Sheet (to share information about the study with you)
- Certificate of Consent (for signatures if you choose to participate)

You will be given a copy of the full Informed Consent Form

Part I: Information Sheet

I wish to invite your child to participate in the study I will be conducting. The objective of this study is to explore the potential of using karate to give children more productive alternatives to using violence as a means to achieve their needs. You may speak to anyone you feel comfortable speaking with about this research before making the decision to participate. Please ask me to explain should there be anything you do not understand. If you have any questions at a later stage, please do not hesitate to ask me.

For me to do the study, I will need to conduct interviews with your child. The interviews will be structured in a way that it will form part of the normal Karate class structure, and be presented in a fun way. The classes will be audio recorded, and transcribed by myself. Only I, my supervisor, and anyone directly related to the research study will have access to the transcripts, which will be destroyed once transcribed.

Questions and class will be in Afrikaans and English. The questions will center around the children's perceptions of violence as well as their perceptions on the use of violence as a tool. Their responses before they start Karate classes, responses recorded a few months later, and then their responses at the end of the study will be recorded and compared to determine whether the karate training has indeed influenced their perceptions on violence, and how it has been influenced.

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw your child at any time, without any adverse consequences. Your child's identity will be kept confidential, and no information will be used to identify them.

A summary of the research findings will be made available to you should you request it.

If you have any further queries, or would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 082 305 7330 or by email at leoni.esplin@gmail.com.

My research supervisor is Professor Deidre Byrne and can be contacted on 012-429 4940

Kind regards

Leoni Santiago

Appendix B

Part II: Certificate of Consent

I, _____, confirm that my child _____ has been invited to participate in research about changing perceptions on violence through Karate. I understand that the sessions will be recorded and transcribed, and have been informed of any risks or benefits involved.

I have read the information given, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to allowing my child to participate in this study.

I understand that my child's participation is voluntary, and he/she may withdraw at any time, or I may withdraw him/her without adverse consequences.

I understand all information will be treated confidentially and no information will be used to identify my child.

I have been informed of how the results will be compiled, and the progress of the project will be discussed with the researcher's supervisor and other researchers involved in the project.

I confirm that I give my consent for my child to participate in the proposed research study and have received a copy of this form for my records.

Name and surname of parent: (Please Print)

Name and Surname of Child (Please Print)

Signature of parent: _____

Date: _____

*If illiterate*⁷

I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the individual has given consent freely.

Name of witness (Please Print): _____



Thumb print / Mark of participant

Signature of witness _____ **Date** _____

⁷ A literate witness must sign (if possible, this person should be selected by the participant and should have no connection to the research team). Participants who are illiterate should include their thumb print as well.

Appendix C

RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

At the beginning of the Karate program:

1. Age
2. Ethnicity (ethnicity and cultural background helps determine the community factors that may influence the participants perspectives)
3. Family status (nuclear family / single parent family / extended family / child-headed household)
4. Address
5. School
6. School attendance
7. Any history of getting into trouble at school
8. Grade
9. Types of friends
10. After school activities / aftercare (helps determine whether child supervised in afternoon)
11. Have they witnessed any violence
12. Have they ever been a victim of violence
13. Do they know a victim of violence
14. Do they know a perpetrator of violence
15. Their thoughts on violence
16. Their ideas on asserting or proving masculinity
17. What does it mean to be a man
18. What are their thoughts on effective problem solving

19. How do they approach conflict resolution
20. Do they think violence is an effective means of conflict resolution
21. How do their friends solve conflict
22. How do their parents approach conflict resolution and discipline
23. If they consider violence to be a solution, why do they feel this way
24. Do they think there can be other ways to resolve conflict

At the end of the research project:

25. Have their perceptions on violence changed
26. Do they still consider violence to be an acceptable form of conflict resolution
27. Have they found other ways to tackle their problems
28. How do their friends and family feel about their change in perception
29. How do they feel about using other conflict resolution methods

Appendix D

LETTER TO KARATE DOJO'S

My name is Leoni Santiago and I wish to conduct a study entitled “An investigation into changing perceptions on violence through karate programs”. This research is in fulfillment of my Master’s degree in Psychology through the University of South Africa (Unisa).

The objective of this study is to explore the potential of using karate to give children more productive alternatives to using violence as a means to achieve their needs.

I respectfully request permission to incorporate this study in my weekly classes, and allow me to approach the parents regarding the children’s participation.

The interviews will be incorporated into the normal class structure as part of the instruction.

The children will be asked specific questions at the beginning of the study, and then another set of questions at the end of the study.

The children are free to withdraw from the study at any time, with no adverse consequences, while continuing the normal Karate classes.

I undertake to use the information obtained in a responsible manner, as well as adhere to the dojo’s rules and regulations.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 082 305 7330 or at leoni.esplin@gmail.com. Alternatively, you can contact my research supervisor at 012-429 4940.